THE Nation.

HEALTHCARE HEATS UP
The Editors
Christopher Hayes

FIXING THE FED
William Greider

C. WRIGHT MILLS, REVISITED
Norman Birnbaum

A PERFECT STORM THE ECONOMIC CRISIS SLAMS THE NONPROFIT WORLD
EYAL PRESS

MARCH 30, 2009
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Letters

Starve the Pentagon; Feed the Workers

Lansdowne, Pa.

The calls, from Christopher Hayes and Barney Frank, to "Cut the Military Budget" [March 2] point out how weapons contracts are being rebranded as jobs programs to fight military spending cuts. What Hayes and Frank miss, however, is the importance of these jobs to American high-tech workers. Most defense jobs require security clearances, available only to US citizens. Microsoft, IBM and others are free to outsource software development to other countries or to bring engineers here on H-1B visas. But military contractors like Lockheed Martin, L-3 and General Dynamics are among the dwindling number of employers who offer US engineers job stability.

That's why weapons like the F-22 Raptor jet, the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter and Ballistic Missile Defense, spread out through byzantine subcontracts to as many Congressional districts as possible, continue to enjoy bipartisan support. For example, even though New Jersey's 3rd District elected its first Democrat in years last November, cutting military spending will be a tough sell for the new incumbent, given that the district's largest employer is Lockheed Martin.

Engineers at defense companies might be able to apply their skills to alternative energy, mass transit or electric cars rather than fighter jets and missiles, but they're going to need retraining as well as the job stability currently provided by their security clearances. A federal agency for advanced research contracts, similar to DoD's DARPA, could help. Without such a transition plan, efforts to cut the military budget will face fierce opposition, not just from the Pentagon but from the middle-class communities that depend on these US-only stimulus programs.

Robert McMahon

Looted & Booted

Bronx, N.Y.

I've been a subscriber since 1937 because *The Nation* almost always illustrates my positions and augments my knowledge. This note is to congratulate whoever chose the photograph of Pete Peterson for the cover of the March 2 issue. The cliché is resoundingly true: a picture is better than a thousand words.

Burton Shapiro

Fresno, Calif.

I read "The Man Who Wants to Loot Social Security" [March 2] with personal interest. Pete Peterson's Blackstone Group recently bought the company I have worked for as a wage slave for nearly sixteen years. His minions have decided to slash as many full-time positions as possible to eliminate benefits. Vacations and sick pay will be terminated along with the jobs. My job is history. This man, one of the wealthiest people in the world, will benefit because my 240 hours of sick pay will be eliminated without compensation.

The good news is that I recently turned 62. I have filed for early Social Security benefits. Since Peterson is 82, I can only hope he expires before he also manages to take my earned Social Security away from me.

Berl Jay Hubbell

'End-Users' Embrace New Media

Eugene, Ore.

Eric Alterman's March 2 "Liberal Media" column is a clear and fully scoped discussion of the precipitous decline of daily newspapers. It includes important solutions, but it also accepts a key assumption that is not so sound: "To ad buyers the worth of an Internet reader is barely 10 percent of that of a print customer." That's true now, but we're not stuck here forever.

Media end-users—readers—are moving to new media much faster than advertisers. The fear of change on the part of ad buyers (enabled by the inertia of most print publishers) has the media world in a state of severe distortion: advertisers are overpaying for dwindling print audiences and underpaying for burgeoning online audiences. And that is

(continued on page 24)

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Healthcare Heats Up

Barack Obama opened the March 5 White House forum on healthcare on a promising note, describing action on the issue as a moral and fiscal imperative. "Our inability to reform healthcare in the past is just one example of how special interests have had their way, and the public interest has fallen by the wayside," he cautioned. "And I know people are afraid we'll draw the same old lines in the sand and give in to the same entrenched interests and arrive back at the same stalemate we've been stuck in for decades."

EDITORIAL

Ironically, Obama delivered this message to a room of "stakeholders," many of whom represent those "same entrenched interests." House Republican Joe Barton was there to brag about blocking reforms in the 1990s. Big Pharma CEOs were accorded prime speaking slots. So was the president of America's Health Insurance Plans, the trade group that battered reform proposals in the '90s with those noxious "Harry and Louise" ads. (See also Christopher Hayes on prominent opponent Rick Scott, on page 4.)

Meanwhile, the doctor who heads Physicians for a National Health Program—which would replace the for-profit model with the single-payer, publicly run program Obama has said he'd prefer if he were "designing a system from scratch"—was let in only after intense lobbying and was kept far from the microphones.

When it comes to healthcare, we'd be delighted if Obama decided to start from scratch. This magazine has long supported the development of a single-payer plan, the most efficient and equitable repair for a system that leaves close to 50 million Americans uninsured and at least 40 million underinsured, and that costs far more to maintain than those of countries with national healthcare programs. But the president is not going to go there—at least not yet. Determined to avoid the mistakes of the Clinton era, Obama is bending over backward to make initial discussions transparent and inclusive, if also vague. The White House wants Congress to take the lead on drafting a plan—as it did with the stimulus package, which started strong in the House, took a hit in the Senate and was approved with a push from Obama. This gambit makes tactical sense. No matter what the president proposes, healthcare reform won't go anywhere without a Congressional buy-in, as the Clintons learned the hard way.

There have already been good moves on the Hill. House Appropriations Committee chair David Obey tipped his hand in January when he proposed to subsidize healthcare for older workers until they become eligible for Medicare. This complements a smart strategy long championed by Congressman Pete Stark, chair of the health subcommittee of the powerful Ways and Means Committee, to build on Medicare's success as the "preferred approach to universal coverage." And Senator Edward Kennedy, still a dominant player in the debate despite his own ailing health, is talking up a plan under which "all citizens would have the option of remaining in their employer-based plans or joining Medicare—a program which has earned the trust of the American people."

Any proposal will face a fight. Congressional reformers should not compromise at the outset or allow opponents to frame the debate. Despite what the fearmongers say, a government-run option along the lines of Kennedy's plan would be cost-efficient, effective and far superior to the profit-driven mess we're in. Obama campaigned on universal coverage and has budgeted $634 billion to get reforms going. Congressional allies should match that with a proposal that puts Americans' health needs ahead of private interests.

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News & Analysis

Melissa Harris-Lacewell: Obama's debt to New Orleans

Barbara Crossette: Afghanistan's future

Slide Show: Movies for hard times

The Archivist: Remembering a red from *Reds*

The Notion: New bloggers on culture

Healthcare Enemy No. 1

100 DAYS

Rush Limbaugh offers Democrats an irresistible target as the de facto leader of the Republican Party, but for my money, Rick Scott is the man who best embodies the spirit of the current conservative opposition. The name may not exactly be a household word, or it may ring a faint bell, but *Politico* recently reported that the millionaire Republican would be heading up Conservatives for Patients' Rights (CPR), a new group that plans to spend around $20 million to kill President Obama's efforts at healthcare reform.

Having Scott lead the charge against healthcare reform is like tapping Bernie Madoff to campaign against tighter securities regulation. You see, the for-profit hospital chain Scott helped found—the one he ran and built his entire reputation on—was discovered to be in the habit of defrauding the government out of hundreds of millions of dollars.

This is the man who will be delivering what *Politico* called the "pro-free-market message."

A Texas lawyer who shared a business partner with George W. Bush, Scott started his health company, Columbia Hospital Corporation, in 1987. Its growth was meteoric, expanding from just a few hospitals to more than 1,000 facilities in thirty-eight states and three other countries in 1997. As his firm gobbled up chains, like the Frist family's Hospital Corporation of America (HCA), it became the largest for-profit hospital chain in the country. By 1994, Columbia/HCA was one of the forty largest corporations in America, and Scott had acquired a reputation as the Gordon Gecko of the healthcare world. "Whose patients are you stealing?" he would ask employees at his newly acquired hospitals.

He promised to put nonprofit hospitals—which he insisted on referring to as "nontaxpaying" hospitals—out of business and touted his company's single-minded pursuit of profit as a model for the nation's entire healthcare system. "What's happening in Washington is not healthcare reform," he told the *New York Times* in 1994. "Healthcare reform is happening in the marketplace."

The press portrayed Scott as a guru to be admired and feared, "a private capitalist dictator," in the words of one Princeton health economist. "Probably the lowest body fat of anybody I've been in business with," his partner told the *Times*.

"Other hospitals were intimidated," recalls John Schilling, who worked for Columbia/HCA in the 1990s. Scott was "like the bully that would come into town and if you didn't sell to him or partner with him, he would open up shop across the street from you and put you out of business."

Not long after joining the company in 1993 as the supervisor of reimbursement for the Fort Myers, Florida, office, Schilling noticed things weren't quite kosher. "They were looking for ways to maximize reimbursement…which ultimately would improve the bottom line."

One way they did this was to fudge the costs on their Medicare expense reports. They were "basically keeping two sets of books," says Schilling. The company would maintain an inter-

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Noted.

THE TRIALS OF CHAS FREEMAN: The Zionist lobby roared—and President **Obama** blinked.

That's the story, in a nutshell, of the lobby's successful campaign against the appointment of **Charles W. "Chas" Freeman Jr.** as chair of the **National Intelligence Council**. Brilliant, iconoclastic and outspoken, Freeman boasts a long and distinguished record in national security, including service as former ambassador to Saudi Arabia during the Gulf War and as assistant secretary of defense during the Clinton administration. In February Admiral **Dennis Blair**, the director of national intelligence—a longtime friend of Freeman's—chose him to head the NIC, where Freeman would have been the top analyst responsible for overseeing the production of national intelligence estimates (NIEs), among other things. Often controversial—recall the catastrophically wrong 2002 NIE on Iraq's (nonexistent) weapons of mass destruction—the NIEs distill the work of sixteen spy agencies into a (they hope) coherent whole that provides guidance for policy-makers.

Freeman is not afraid to take controversial positions. He strongly opposed the war in Iraq, has spoken out against attacking Iran and supports talking to the Taliban. But his cardinal sin, according to the Zionist lobby and its neocon allies, is that he spoke out against Israeli excesses. "The brutal oppression of the Palestinians by the Israeli occupation shows no sign of ending," he said in a speech in 2007. "American identification with Israel has become total."

The coordinated assault against Freeman started in right-wing blogs, led by **Steve Rosen**'s "Obama Mideast Monitor," on a site led by **Daniel Pipes** and **Michael Rubin** of the American Enterprise Institute and a handful of others. Within days, the attack spread to the *Weekly Standard*, *National Review* and **Marty Peretz**'s *New Republic*, and then to op-eds in the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Washington Post*, which published a particularly scurrilous piece by **Jonathan Chait**, who called Freeman a "fanatic." Backed by furious behind-the-scenes lobbying, it triggered demands for inquiries from members of Congress. Leading the pack were Republicans **John Boehner** and **Eric Cantor**, seven GOP members of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and some leading Democrats, including **Charles Schumer** and **Steve Israel** of New York.

On March 10, Freeman withdrew. "The tactics of the Israel Lobby plumb the depths of dishonor and indecency and include character assassination, selective misquotation, the willful distortion of the record, the fabrication of falsehoods, and an utter disregard for the truth," he said.

Nearly four years ago, I interviewed Freeman about the disastrous appointment of **Porter Goss** as CIA director, an effort by President Bush to install a political watchdog over an agency that is supposed to speak truth to power. Goss was sent to Langley to "impose a vision on [the CIA] that its analysts and operatives reject as simply not based on reality," Freeman told me. "It's totalitarian. We are going to end up with an agency that is more right-wing, more conformist and less prone to produce people with original views and dissenters."

It's now clear that there is little room in the intelligence community, still, for dissenters.

ROBERT DREYFUSS

BALLOT BATTLE: Daniel Fore's résumé should qualify him for any office in **Oak Park**, Illinois. A Naval Reserve vet, he graduated from the local high school, served as an election judge and attends every village board meeting. But Fore's candidacy for village trustee was rejected by the election board, even though he had twice the required number of signatures. The reason: he's homeless. Fore has a blood-clotting disease that prevents him from holding a regular job, but he has lived in Oak Park since 1971. He last resided at the YMCA and now lists a Post Office box as his voting address.

Fore took his case to **Cook County Circuit Court**, which ruled on March 9 that since he didn't provide an address, such as a homeless shelter, he can't appear on the ballot. But it's not that simple: affluent Oak Park has no shelter, housing its needy in a different church each day of the week. "Homelessness is not just someone on the street who's a wino," Fore points out. "It's people living in cars, or FEMA trailers after Katrina."

The homeless are allowed to vote in every state, but Fore's lawsuit marks the first time the courts are considering the right of the homeless to hold public office, said his attorney, **Joseph J. Jacobi**. "Hopefully, it will influence not just courts but legislative bodies," Jacobi says. "You've got a growing homeless population, and you don't want to disenfranchise that population." Jacobi plans an appeal. If it fails, Fore will mount a write-in campaign for the April 7 election. Thanks to his lawsuit, he's got more name recognition than anyone on the ballot.

EDWARD McCLELLAND

BRAHIMI SPEAKS: Lakhdar Brahimi, who led the 2001 talks in Bonn that created the current government structure in Afghanistan, spoke on March 7 with *The Nation*'s UN correspondent, **Barbara Crossette**. Brahimi looked back on the mistakes he now believes the US and the UN made in Afghanistan and discussed how the NATO operation is fragmented among a half-dozen national armies. Among his observations:

"What we've had until now were different national policies.… That is ineffective and at times disastrous because, obviously, it is not possible for several countries to wage separate wars in the same country and be successful. So to bring everybody together around the same table and discuss what needs to be done is a step in the right direction—on condition, however, that this is prepared seriously and that the agenda is not any more the so-called 'war on terror,' which has been a very questionable concept and, at any rate, not very successful in Afghanistan (or anywhere else, for that matter).…

"Afghans know the difference between a friendly military force coming from outside to help them and an occupying force. ISAF [International Security Assistance Force] in the beginning was seen as a friendly force, and it was liked, it was welcomed, it was supported, it was not attacked. But now [since 2003] NATO—I don't think it has performed very well, and more and more people are looking at it as a force of occupation.…

"We are now paying the price for what we did wrong from day one [in 2001].…the people who were in Bonn were not fully representative of the rich variety of the Afghan people."

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nal expense report, what it called a "reserve" report, which accurately tallied its expenses. "And then they would have a second report, which…they would file with the government, which was more aggressive." That report would "include inflated costs and expenses they knew weren't allowable or reimbursable. The one they filed with government might claim $5 million and the reserve would claim $4.5." Columbia/HCA would pocket the difference.

It wasn't just happening in Florida, and it wasn't just fraudulent Medicare expense reports. Around the country, dozens of whistle-blowers like Schilling stepped forward to file lawsuits under the False Claims Act, charging the company with sundry forms of chicanery: kickbacks to doctors in exchange for referrals, illegal deals with homecare agencies and filing false data about the use of hospital space.

By 1997 the FBI was investigating Columbia/HCA. Days after agents raided company facilities armed with search warrants, Scott was forced to resign. In 2000 the company pleaded guilty to fraud and agreed to pay the government $840 million. Other civil settlements would follow, ultimately totaling a staggering $1.7 billion, making it the largest fraud case in American history.

(Scott was never criminally charged and continues to deny wrongdoing. His spokesperson did not respond to repeated interview requests.)

But in Washington there's no such thing as permanent disgrace, and as the healthcare debate heats up, Scott has established himself as a go-to source for reporters looking to hear from the opposition. He's been quoted in the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Washington Post*. He's been on Fox, of course, railing against President Obama's efforts to control healthcare costs. He appeared on CNN, where (as Media Matters noted) host Jessica Yellin never saw fit to notify viewers that the man she introduced as running "a media campaign to limit government's role in the healthcare system" once ran a company that profited mightily from ripping off that government.

Indeed, if there's one thing that's most galling about Scott's antigovernment jihad—and most emblematic—it's that for all his John Galt bluster, he made his fortune (which, yes, he still has) in no small part thanks to steady contract fees from the Great Society's entitlement programs.

Congressman Pete Stark, a veteran of the last bruising round of fighting over healthcare reform, remembers Scott all too well. Stark recently sent his colleagues a letter hoping to refresh their memories. Calling Scott a "swindler," the letter said, "If he is the conservative spokesperson against healthcare reform, there is no debate."

CHRISTOPHER HAYES

Calvin Trillin, Deadline Poet

I'm Sorry, Rush

(An all-purpose apology for Republicans—sung, abjectly, to the tune of "Who's Sorry Now?")

I'm sorry, Rush.
It makes me blush,
Thinking of how come I just didn't hush.
I was a rat
Saying you're fat.
You're not as fat as all that.

Rush, I repent.
My words were bent.
"Rush is a racist" is not what I meant.
"Rush is well-bred,"
I would have said.
"Addict" just slipped out instead.

You wear the crown
With great renown.
I didn't mean to imply you're a clown.
My brain was mush.
If I may gush,
You're godlike. I'm sorry, Rush.

Populists in the House

COMMENT

Oregon Congressman Peter DeFazio, a charter member of the Congressional Progressive Caucus (CPC), is a committed "new New Dealer" who has spent most of his twenty-two years on the Hill battling to create jobs fixing bridges and building mass transit. But on February 13 he voted against the final version of the $787 billion stimulus bill that President Obama and Democratic leaders in Congress hailed as a job-creation bonanza. DeFazio argued that the stimulus bill squandered the promise of economic recovery on too many conservative pipe dreams. "I could support borrowing money for infrastructure investments that will produce a product for generations to come," he explained, "but not $326 billion for tax cuts that will provide limited relief for working families and little economic stimulus."

DeFazio's stimulus vote was a lonely dissent from a still disciplined party line, but it highlighted broader populist ferment among House Democrats. The relative caution of the Obama administration and compromises by Senate Democratic leaders with supposedly moderate Republicans have created a frustrating circumstance for Representatives whose constituents are losing jobs, homes and patience. While most media coverage of Washington's economic debate portrays a battle between bold Democrats and belligerent Republicans, dozens of Congressional Democrats have been arguing—sometimes in party caucuses, sometimes by breaking with leadership on key votes and frequently by using new media to

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speak directly to frightened Americans—that their own party must use its political capital to bail out struggling homeowners and laid-off workers rather than corrupt bankers, brokers and speculators.

"As someone who has been out holding town-hall meetings and getting a faceful of that populist rage, I know that it is real, it is a force that needs to be dealt with and it needs to be given a voice," says Iowa Congressman Bruce Braley, chair of the new Populist Caucus, which launched in mid-February with twenty-three rabble-rousing House members who want their party to stop pulling punches in fights over economic policy. DeFazio is in, as are several other CPC members, as well as a number of rural Democrats who have shied away from joining the liberal CPC. In a Congress with many caucuses and many dual memberships, the Populist Caucus does not represent a break with the broadly focused CPC or with narrowly focused coalitions like the House Trade Working Group. Rather, Braley describes it as a vehicle for members to "focus exclusively" on such economic and corporate power issues as fair trade, fair tax policies and creating and retaining jobs with sound benefits and safe pensions. The group's not there yet, but the idea's got potential.

Many of the House's latter-day William Jennings Bryans were among the ninety-five House Democrats who joined Republicans in mid-September to block then–Treasury Secretary Hank Paulson's bank bailout. Braley, a trial lawyer who grabbed a formerly Republican seat in 2006, dismissed the bailout as "a multibillion-dollar handout to Wall Street that fails to adequately protect the interests of Iowa taxpayers and shortchanges Iowa families."

House Democratic leaders whipped enough of the dissenters (including Braley) into voting for the reworked version of the measure that it ultimately passed. But the desire to "say no to Wall Street"—to borrow a phrase from Ohio Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur, whose floor speeches denouncing the "financial crimes" of bankers and speculators have become an Internet phenomenon—remains strong in a chamber where members keep getting asked to bail out yet another bank but still haven't been able to vote on a plan to protect families from foreclosure. Dismissing the government's initial banks-first response as "most curious, uneven and incomplete," Kaptur urged Americans threatened with foreclosure to "stay in your homes" and battle the banks legally. Minnesota Congressman Keith Ellison and California Congresswoman Maxine Waters have proposed sweeping new protections for renters living in foreclosed properties.

On the other side of the Capitol, Democratic Senators Sherrod Brown of Ohio and Russ Feingold of Wisconsin are moving to block farm foreclosures. And Vermont independent Bernie Sanders, another bailout foe, is demanding to know why Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner keeps pouring hundreds of billions into failed banks without requiring that "failed tycoons" be removed from their executive positions. Sanders and Ohio Congressman Dennis Kucinich barely let a day go by without demanding accountability from banks that have taken bailout dollars.

This progressive populist agitation is likely to intensify as debates over budget priorities and nationalizing banks heat up. But too often the ferment remains unfocused, freelance in character. There is not enough leadership, coherence or steady messaging. The formation of the Populist Caucus is a healthy development, but it is not enough. Braley and other Populist Caucus members—many first- or second-termers whose opinions are taken seriously by leaders hoping to retain their party's majority—lobbied House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to keep job-creating "buy American" protections for iron and steel production, as well as an extension of aid to workers dislocated by trade-related plant closings. That was a good start. We can hope that the caucus will follow two of its members, Illinois's Phil Hare and Maine's Mike Michaud, in demanding that Pelosi block new trade deals that neglect the interests of workers here and abroad.

If the Populist Caucus is to matter, it must go much further in giving voice to the rage at leaders of both parties, who are still quicker to bail out a bank than a foreclosed homeowner. To do that, the caucus must attract urban members like Kaptur and Waters, who have yet to join. And it must channel populist fury more effectively by making policy demands that are as blunt as those from Wall Street's amen corner on the Hill—and back up those demands by delivering or withholding votes. Until that happens, populists will keep making the right noises without making much progress. That's politically dangerous for Democrats, who run the risk of doing too little rather than too much. And it's economically dangerous for the country, which needs more than caution and compromise to tackle the nastiest downturn since the Great Depression. JOHN NICHOLS

Nation Note

We regret to announce that Arthur C. Danto is stepping down as art critic of *The Nation*, a position he has held since 1984. Our gratitude and affection for Arthur is boundless, and we honor his quarter-century of service to the magazine. Like many readers, we've had our understanding of art enriched by Arthur's column, in which aesthetic discernment, philosophical rigor and a playful sense of humor have been brought to bear on the work of contemporary and classical artists, from Andy Warhol, Cindy Sherman and Robert Mapplethorpe to Poussin, Tintoretto and Degas. Arthur's *Encounters and Reflections: Art in the Historical Present*, which features many essays published during the early years of the Danto era at *The Nation*, won the National Book Critics Circle Award for Criticism in 1990, and *The Madonna of the Future*, which collects later *Nation* pieces, was awarded the Prix Philosophie in 2003. Happily, Arthur will not be leaving us altogether: although his health limits his ability to roam museums and galleries, he will stay on as a contributing editor, writing occasionally about art. The magazine will continue to publish regular reviews of art exhibitions. A big thanks from all of us, Arthur.

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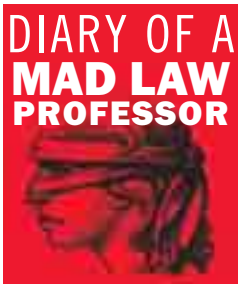
Patricia J. Williams

Science and Supposition

On March 9 President Obama signed an order guaranteeing "scientific integrity" in federal policy-making, specifically repudiating the propriety of ideological influence. Under most post-Enlightenment circumstances, such a directive would have been deemed tautological. But during the past eight years of the Bush administration's Newspeak, scientific findings have been manipulated, corrupted and/or censored in service to commercial interests rather than reproducible results.

Most public discussion of Obama's renewed support of the sciences has centered on stem cell research, for which federal funding had heretofore been blocked—largely in response to religious conservatives, who view the fertilization and manipulation of embryos solely for research as akin to murder. While the Obama administration's policy will indeed allow better-funded research in this area, technological advances have made the ethics of the debate somewhat archaic. Today it is possible to transform adult cells into an embryonic state, thus bypassing most religious questions of whether the embryo is a pre-born person. But the larger dimensions of this administration's commitment have ramifications far beyond stem cells. The Obama policy also affects hiring protocols. Not only must scientific decisions be sheltered from political quarrels; science advisers are to be chosen for their expertise, not toadyism; whistle-blowers who report bad practices or questionable findings will not have to fear for their jobs. Moreover, the president has set up a Council of Advisers on Science and Technology who will report directly to him.



In addition to stem cell research, the new protocols will have significant salutary influence on research into climate change, genetics, sex education, pollution and food safety. Under Bush, the budgets for the National Institutes of Health and for the Centers for Disease Control were all but frozen. The food pyramid was redesigned so as not to offend sugar manufacturers. Cattle ranchers were blocked from testing their own herds for mad cow disease, for fear of offending the beef lobby. Climatologist James Hansen of NASA was forbidden to speak to the media about his conviction that global warming was worsening. Despite lots of evidence about the public health rewards of education about condoms and safe sex, such information was muffled in deference to the disproved efficacy of "abstinence only" as the centerpiece of AIDS and STD prevention.

Bush supported positions that allowed pharmacists to refuse to fill prescriptions, based on individual religious beliefs instead of professional ethics. He opposed the morning-after pill and the vaccine against human papilloma virus (the virus linked to increased likelihood of cervical cancer). His White House engaged a lawyer who had once been a lobbyist for the American Petroleum Institute to filter, alter and edit reports produced by the federal Climate Change Science Program. And, of course, Bush weakened the Endangered Species Act by allowing a wide range of government mining and building projects to proceed without any independent or scientific review of their environmental impact.

President Obama's reinstating the importance of independent scientific research has been underscored by his ferociously intelligent brain trust, chock-full of Nobel laureates. All this should lead to a more robust grappling with the life-altering crises facing our planet. And it ought to provide a good base from which to take on other, no less pressing but far less publicized issues of biotechnology. With the birth of Nadya Suleman's octuplets, for example, public sentiment seems to have flipped overnight from calls for abstinence-as-the-best-medicine to calls for forced sterilization of poor and/or single women. There is also a complicated debate about free-market eugenics we will soon have to confront—the tip of the iceberg being in vitro fertilization clinics that advertise their willingness to try to weed out embryos with cosmetic traits that may be undesirable to parents, like certain hair or eye or skin color.

Similarly, untold sums are being diverted to policing and surveillance, including functional magnetic resonance technology, which claims, prematurely, to be able to deploy brain scans as lie detectors. This past September a woman in India was convicted of murdering her former fiancé after a court-ordered MRI showed what authorities claimed was her memory of the event. This conclusion was based on metrics that map which parts of the brain store the past, imagine the future or work harder when summoning pictures, hearing sounds or registering smell. And so the defendant was convicted based on which parts of her cortex lit up as the prosecution's charge was read to her. In a few months, a number of start-up companies will commence broad-scale marketing of just such mind-reading toys in the United States. We must be prepared to ask what these developments mean for the notion we call "privacy," to say nothing of the boundary against intrusion that "taking the Fifth" establishes. What does it mean when "I" say—and "I" believe—one thing, but my brain waves decide to incriminate me? Have I been invaded? Am I more than one mind? Am I mad?

On other fronts, the medical ethics of euthanizing severely disabled infants or terminally ill elders is re-emerging as a philosophically freighted issue for theologians and utilitarians alike. And a global transplant market has inspired interest in more "efficient" organ harvesting; this, in turn, has led to practices that in effect move up a patient's time of death by redefining expiration as "cardiac death" rather than "brain death."

We live in a geologic age so affected by the complexities of human activity that scientists have begun to call it the Anthropocene Era. President Obama's directives recognize that any hope of repair depends upon wise political choices informed by independent expertise and repeatedly tested outcomes. ■

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Eric Alterman

The Liberal Media

It *Can* Happen Here

While it is undoubtedly true that some liberals on some occasions have underestimated the dangers posed to the United States and its democratic institutions by its adversaries, it is no less true, and perhaps far more significant, that we all—including the most alarmist "Bush haters" among us—underestimated the dangers posed to same by the Bush administration.

The ACLU request for, and Justice Department release of, previously secret memos force us to focus on just how eager Bush administration members were to destroy American democracy and replace it with a presidential dictatorship. According to Justice's Office of Legal Counsel, the Bush administration believed it had the right to use the military to seize alleged terrorists in their homes without a warrant, thereby defenestrating the Fourth Amendment protection against unreasonable search and seizure and the Posse Comitatus Act, which prohibits the military from carrying out law enforcement operations at home. The First Amendment right of free speech was also considered the product of a bygone era. What's more, Congress, the memos insisted, could be safely ignored and treaties torn up on presidential whim. In a related matter, we've learned that Jose Rodriguez Jr., as CIA directorate of operations chief, ordered the destruction of ninety-two interrogation videotapes because then–CIA director Michael Hayden worried that they posed "a serious security risk." An intelligence agency that violates the law and destroys evidence with impunity is yet another step on the path to a police state.

These memos demonstrate the extent to which violations of our civil liberties went unreported, and therefore unremarked upon, during the Bush years. Shortly after 9/11, for instance, George Washington University law professor and *New Republic* legal affairs editor Jeff Rosen prematurely announced that "the real story after September 11 is that America hasn't yet come close to abandoning any immutable principles of its national identity." My guess is that Rosen would like to have those words back, and, indeed, he spent a great deal of time later criticizing abuses that did come to light. And while many such abuses were discussed in the mainstream media, few alarm bells were sounded. Instead we were instructed by the luminaries of the punditocracy not to worry our pretty little heads about it. As Andrew Sullivan told us just after Bush & Co. managed its Supreme Court victory in 2000, the "adults" were in control. Sullivan eventually came to his senses—albeit not before he hinted that extraconstitutional measures might be necessary to assure the loyalty of citizens in the states that had supported Al Gore (including the one attacked on 9/11). But to call into question the Bush administration's good-faith commitment to democracy and civil liberties was, for the first seven years of his presidency, enough to read oneself out of polite company in Washington. As late as November 2004, the much admired *Washington Post* columnist—and "dean" of the Washington press corps—David Broder instructed the rest of us that although Bush did win the election, "he will have to work within the system for whatever he gets. Checks and balances are still there," he said. "The nation does not face 'another dark age,' unless you consider politics with all its tradeoffs and bargaining a black art." In fact, Broder had no idea what he was talking about. But that didn't stop him from lecturing the rest of us to mind our own business and leave our liberties in the hands of power-mad right-wing ideologues (just as he did nearly twenty years before, complaining about the "expensive legal exercise" then under way to determine the criminal culpability of Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, Caspar Weinberger, Elliott Abrams, Oliver North et al., when they, too, threatened the Constitution during the Iran/Contra affair).

What's doubly infuriating about the memos—created by then–Deputy Assistant Attorney General John Yoo and then–Special Counsel Robert Delahunty—is the flimsiness of their legal reasoning. Duke University legal scholar Walter Dellinger told a reporter he found it impossible to "get over how bad these opinions were." Stephen Gillers of NYU law school called them "sloppy, one-sided and incompetent." Reached by a reporter from an Orange County newspaper, Yoo admitted that the memos "lack a certain polish" but insisted he would not change their substance today. But five days before leaving office, the last remnant of the Bush Justice Department, apparently worried about the implications of such laws in the hands of their successors, issued a "memorandum for the files" that explained that many memos issued between 2001 and 2003 no longer reflected the views of the Justice Department, and besides, some had already been secretly withdrawn.

Since the memos' publication, we've seen some strongly worded condemnations in unsigned newspaper editorials and in the liberal blogosphere, but few MSM pundits have demanded the legal accountability that is the only reliable prophylactic against future abuses. The only question raised during Obama's first White House press conference about the myriad crimes committed by the previous administration—asked by Sam Stein of the Huffington Post—was an inquiry about whether the president would seek to "rule out" future prosecution of the guilty. While some Democrats, led by Patrick Leahy in the Senate and John Conyers Jr. in the House, are refusing to let the issue die, few in the press corps appear to have much interest or stomach for further investigation of just how many of our liberties had been lost. (All the memos haven't even been released yet.) Obama's calculation is clear: investigations would threaten the aura of bipartisanship he seeks in order to pass his ambitious agenda. But in the case of the mainstream media, the motivation is simply the mindset: admit the dangers posed to our democracy by the Bush administration, and you're admitting that democracy's watchdog was sleeping (or cowering) just when he, and she, were most needed. ■

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In the days between Christmas and New Year's Eve, Anthony Romero, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union, sat at his desk in Lower Manhattan and reached out to people who had lavished generous donations on his organization during the long, benighted tenure of George W. Bush. It was a heady moment: the era of Dick Cheney, John Ashcroft and Alberto Gonzales was winding to a close, and Barack Obama was about to assume office, having vowed to rescind some of his predecessor's more egregious assaults on civil liberties.

But Romero wasn't phoning his supporters to share the joy—he was calling to plead for cash after a season (actually, several seasons) of thwarted solicitations. Throughout the spring and summer, would-be donors had explained, over and over again, that they were too busy writing checks to the Obama campaign. By the time Obama mounted the stage to deliver his acceptance speech in Chicago on election night, many had become preoccupied with something else: the implosion of the economy. As Romero worked the phone from his office on the nineteenth floor of the downtown high-rise, around the corner from the New York Stock Exchange, he could feel the aftershocks of the collapse.

"I'll come back, but I lost it all," one longtime donor told Romero.

"I love you guys, but it's gone—all gone," said another.

The most expensive presidential campaign in history and the cataclysmic financial meltdown of the past few months combined to produce a "perfect storm," Romero told me recently. The storm blew a $19 million hole in the ACLU's budget, resulting in a hiring freeze and the cancellation of various projects, followed by the announcement, in January, that 10 percent of the national staff was being let go. Employees with decades of experience were told to clear out their offices; no department was left unscathed.

Founded in 1920, the ACLU boasts a membership of 530,000 and assets of more than $200 million. However dire the economic downturn gets, Romero, who has weathered his share of controversy at the ACLU but also presided over a period of impressive achievements and growth, can rest assured his organization will be around in a couple of years. It's an assumption a growing number of his peers in the nonprofit world can't make. At a forum in New York City in November, Paul Light, a professor of public service at New York University, predicted that "at a minimum" more than 100,000 nonprofit organizations would be wiped out in the next two years. Light asked the audience members whether any of them had tuned in to the recent hearing in Washington on the impending nonprofit upheaval. The room fell silent. Light then admitted he'd missed the deliberations as well, because, alas, there hadn't been any. "We should demand a hearing immediately on the state of the nonprofit sector—immediately," he declared.

Not everyone believes the fallout will be quite so cataclysmic—historically, the nonprofit sector has proved surprisingly resilient, even growing during some recent recessions—but the scale and scope of the current downturn is clearly different. And its reverberations will likely extend far beyond the world

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of high-profile advocacy organizations like the ACLU. From the arts to education, soup kitchens to housing organizations, nonprofits perform an array of functions that shape the texture of daily life in communities across the country, often by helping people whose situations were precarious even before the economy crashed. Now, with foundations watching their endowments shrivel, many individual donors maxed out and states across the country staring at massive budget deficits, nonprofits are scaling back their services at the very moment when the need for them is escalating.

The Greater Hartford Legal Aid agency occupies the third floor of a boxy glass-and-concrete building a few blocks down from the University of Connecticut School of Law. Its executive director, Elam Lantz Jr., doesn't like to talk about the ripple effects that the financial crisis has had on his agency. "I would not use the word 'ripple'—it's more like a tsunami," Lantz, a mild-mannered man with a clipped gray beard and wire-frame glasses, tells me. "It's more dire than it's ever been—this is a sharp plummet, not a decline."

The main cause of the sharp plummet is a seemingly unrelated development—the decline in interest rates to near zero—that has taken a disastrous toll on legal aid organizations, which, in Connecticut and many other states, receive a substantial share of their funding from the interest on temporary trusts that lawyers hold for clients while carrying out transactions such as real estate deals. This might seem like an odd way to finance such an essential social good, and it is, but the evisceration during the Reagan era of the Legal Services Corporation, the federal agency created in the 1970s to fund legal aid programs and a longstanding target of Republicans, forced states to find creative alternatives. Back when interest rates were 3 to 4 percent, the creativity seemed to be paying off. Now that they've nose-dived, agencies from Ohio to Oregon are scrambling to survive. In Connecticut, the interest on lawyer trusts generated $21 million in 2007; the figure will plunge to under $4 million this year. At Greater Hartford Legal Aid, six attorneys have been let go and more cuts may soon follow. "I have to raise $500,000 somehow," says Lantz glumly, "and then spend some of our operating reserves. That will take us to 2010, and we're just going to have to take it one year at a time."

All this means an already overburdened legal aid system will be that much less likely to help people like Evelyn Colon. A single mother with two young daughters, last year Colon dialed the 800 number in Connecticut that refers low-income residents to attorneys who might be willing to represent them. Colon had just received an eviction notice, even though she'd kept up with her rent, after her landlord's property went into foreclosure. Her case fell to Stephanie D'Ambrose, an attorney at Greater Hartford Legal Aid. D'Ambrose discovered that the author of the eviction notice, Fannie Mae, which weeks earlier had been bailed out by the government, was obligated to treat renters more leniently under the terms of the conservatorship it had entered. After the *Hartford Courant* ran a story about the case, calls began pouring in from lawyers across the country representing people in similar situations. The mounting legal challenges eventually prompted Fannie Mae to announce a moratorium on all post-foreclosure evictions. At the time, there were 10,000 such cases pending nationwide.

D'Ambrose, a former Peace Corps volunteer whose desk is cluttered with manila folders and thank-you cards from various clients she's served, beams with pride when talking about the case. But she hasn't had much time to savor her success: she is among the lawyers at Greater Hartford Legal Aid who were recently laid off, and she is searching for work while trying to stomach leaving an agency swamped with need. "We already turn away a lot of people; now we'll turn away that many more," she says.

From affordable housing to the arts, nonprofits perform an array of vital functions. Now, they're scaling back just when they're needed most.

Unlike D'Ambrose, Sudha Acharya, executive director of the South Asian Council for Social Services, hasn't had to thumb through any help-wanted ads lately. She's just taken a 50 percent pay cut that, along with a 15 percent cut imposed on her staff, has enabled her agency to keep its doors open, for now. Located on the ground floor of a brick building on a noisy commercial drag in Flushing, Queens, SACSS is the sort of agency most at risk of not making it through the downturn: a shoestring operation that could disappear tomorrow with few people noticing, save for the hundreds of South Asian immigrants who rely on it for job training courses and healthcare workshops that help clients navigate a byzantine system even many native New Yorkers find impenetrable. (Among people in the state without health benefits, fully half are eligible but either don't know they are or can't figure out how to apply.)

Acharya says her organization stays afloat on a mix of foundation support, corporate donations, individual contributions and community funds but is seeing money from all sources dry up. The agency recently had to scrap an English-language class it had been offering in the Bronx; it has kept other services intact despite receiving no money for them. I ask her who else in her circles is feeling strained. "Everybody," she says with a sigh. One of the groups with which Acharya's agency partners is the Community Service Society (CSS) of New York, a 160-year-old advocacy and direct service organization for low-income residents. Its president, David Jones, describes the forces that are making the work of charitable groups like his seem like an increasingly Sisyphean task: on the one hand, cash-strapped cities and states slashing programs; on the

Eyal Press, a Nation *contributing writer, is the author of* Absolute Convictions: My Father, a City and the Conflict that Divided America *(Picador).*

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other, private foundations reducing outlays by as much or more. Jones's colleague Frank Kortright works with a network of nonprofits that help tenants in New York City avoid eviction. The network has been fielding more and more calls lately from high-income residents it rarely heard from in the past. Yet CSS recently had its city funding sliced in half. Jones says similar cuts are "in the offing" from foundations. He sits on the board of one that "just voted for a 60 percent cut in their amounts."

Some of the losses that soup kitchens, homeless shelters and job training centers are experiencing may soon be offset as money from the stimulus bill trickles down from Washington to agencies that contract with state and local government, says Lester Salamon, director of the Center for Civil Society Studies at Johns Hopkins University. But the relief won't spread to everyone: cultural institutions such as museums and orchestras rely mainly on charitable donations and the sale of tickets and subscriptions. Many are canceling exhibits and shows. The situation is similarly dire for advocacy organizations that don't take government money and are now competing for a limited—in some cases, nonexistent—pool of funds. A few months ago, Madeline deLone, director of the Innocence Project, which has pioneered the use of DNA technology to overturn wrongful convictions, was sitting in a meeting when her communications director burst through the door. It was mid-December, and the details of Bernard Madoff's spectacular $50 billion Ponzi scheme were just coming to light. On the phone was a reporter who wanted the Innocence Project's reaction to the revelation that among Madoff's victims was the JEHT Foundation, a leading funder of criminal justice reform. The news was a surprise to deLone, who rushed to her computer, clicked on an e-mail that had landed in her in-box that morning and learned that nearly half the Innocence Project's foundation support—12 percent of its overall budget—was gone. With it went the possibility that some prisoners serving time for crimes they did not commit would ever get the chance to prove it. "What we do is DNA testing, and many states don't have evidence-retention statutes," says deLone, "so the longer it takes for us to get to cases, the less likely the evidence will be there. Clearly, there will be cases where the biological evidence we could have tested will be destroyed between today and the time we can get to the case."

To the extent that their voices are muted by a lack of resources, advocates risk missing a chance for change that might not come again.

Elisa Massimino, executive director of Human Rights First, learned about the collapse of JEHT a few days after receiving a multiyear, $2.4 million grant from the foundation. "It was an earthquake," she tells me. Days later came the equally jolting news that the Picower Foundation, with an endowment of $1 billion, was also shutting down, likewise courtesy of Madoff. It had just pledged $250,000 to Human Rights First to fund a program for indigent refugees seeking asylum. "We're not disappearing, but we've got to find a way to do more with less," says Massimino. "Every organization I've talked to is going through this."

Thanks to the transformation of the political landscape, the work of many liberal advocacy groups has lately become easier. As the ACLU's Romero puts it, "Ashcroft never met with me; [Attorney General Michael] Mukasey never met with me." Now, he says, "the lines are hugely open…it's night and day." On the other hand, to the extent that their voices are muted because of a lack of resources, advocates of progressive change risk missing an opportunity that might not come around again. This is the concern of Gara LaMarche, head of The Atlantic Philanthropies, one of the largest, most socially progressive foundations in the country. LaMarche cites healthcare as an example. "If healthcare reform is going to pass, it will probably be this year," he says. "Healthcare is not something you can say, 'OK, it's a bad year; we'll put it off until 2010 or 2011'—it's now or never." On this and a host of other issues, the early months of the Obama administration are likely to be critical, which is why, despite losses suffered by his foundation's endowment, LaMarche plans to increase giving in the short term and to lend support to advocacy organizations reeling from the collapse of other foundations. As part of this effort, The Atlantic Philanthropies and the Open Society Institute agreed in December to match donations made by members of MoveOn.org to four groups—Human Rights Watch, the Center for Constitutional Rights, the Brennan Center for Justice and the Advancement Project—that had lost money through investment funds Madoff controlled.

The initiative, which raised $1.2 million, could inspire similar collaborations, though it just as easily may not. The Atlantic Philanthropies is a "spend down" foundation whose mandate is to give away all its assets by 2018. The Open Society Institute is the philanthropic arm of billionaire financier George Soros. Neither operates off an asset base designed to last in perpetuity, as is the case with many foundations that have seen their endowments shrink by 20 to 30 percent over the past few months. Some of these foundations are calling for the creation of a revolving-loans fund, backed by the government, that would provide urgently needed capital to social service and cultural institutions they can't support. Among the speakers at a recent Congressional briefing where this idea was aired was Diana Aviv, president of the Independent Sector, a coalition of foundations and charities, and Ford Bell, president of the American Association of Museums.

At a time when taxpayer dollars have been showered on banks, such a fund seems like the least the government could do for a sector whose leaders did not push for reckless deregulation or pay themselves exorbitant bonuses in recent years. But others argue that the responsibility for supporting endangered nonprofits should fall to foundations, which still command billions of dollars in assets and are accorded nonprofit status in part because it is assumed that self-preservation is not their primary goal. "Large institutions have choices," says

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Rick Cohen, former head of the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy. "Do they husband their resources for their own purposes, or do they say, 'At this time we are called on to do more'? As social institutions, aren't they obligated to step up to the plate?"

Pablo Eisenberg, a professor at Georgetown University and columnist for *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, echoes this view, pointing to Bill Gates. "In his recent letter, Gates said he's going to increase his giving to 7 percent of net returns," says Eisenberg, "yet the foundation world opposes mandating that everyone must give at least 6 percent because they have to exist in perpetuity. Says who? The frontline defense of nonprofits should be foundations that support nonprofits."

Some prominent foundations are heeding these calls. The MacArthur Foundation has disbursed $68 million in emergency grants to mitigate the subprime mortgage crisis in Chicago, boosted funding for the arts and front-loaded donations to human rights organizations even as its endowment has been depleted, a response Jonathan Fanton, its president, declines to depict as outsize in its generosity. "In 2003 we had about $3.8 billion in assets," Fanton tells me. "We got up to nearly $7 billion, and now we're at $5.2 billion. So the endowment is off maybe 20 percent, but if you see a starting point of 3.8 and you're now at 5.2, you don't feel so poor."

"We're giving back some of the extraordinary gains we earned," he continues, "and I think it's important for some institutions to hold steady and say, 'You can count on us; we're not going to reduce our investment in human rights, affordable housing, all the rest.' Maybe if other foundations did the same, it would begin to ease the fear and panic."

One question that was put off during the boom is how much even a wealthy society like the US can realistically expect of nonprofits.

Some fallout in the nonprofit sector may be inevitable. And there may even be some benefit in forcing grant recipients to think hard about how to use their resources, a question that was easy to put off when the inflated stock market caused the level of giving to swell. Nonprofit agencies love to portray themselves as mission-driven operations staffed by underpaid idealists who never think about themselves, but the field also has its share of organizations that lack a clear mission and sometimes seem more concerned with burnishing their image than advancing social change or meeting their clients' needs. If such groups are forced to rethink their priorities or close their doors, it might not be a bad thing. "Has there been a nonprofit bubble along the lines of the market bubble?" asks Gara LaMarche. "Probably, and it's beginning to burst. Are there too many small groups? Are the bigger groups as creative and intelligent with their resources as they could be? Do turf issues tend to get in the way of joint ventures? These conversations may be driven by crisis, but out of it could come some more effective ways of doing things."

There is another question people tend to put off when too much money is swishing around—namely, how much even a wealthy society like the United States can realistically expect of the nonprofit sector. Few politicians in recent years issued warnings about the danger of relying too much on private charities to help the poor—these charities were, after all, the widely heralded alternative to the welfare system, whose defects came to represent the evils of big government. But today, the number of Americans receiving cash assistance through what remains of the welfare system has fallen to a forty-year low despite spiraling unemployment, a disparity that prompted Ron Haskins, a former Republican Congressional aide who helped craft the welfare reform law, to tell the *New York Times* that even he has become "concerned." The *Times* story appeared the day I met with David Jones of the Community Service Society, who shared this concern but was not surprised. "Responsibility for the poor was a government function in the Great Depression and Roosevelt's time," said Jones. "Now more and more people who lose their jobs turn to charity because we've off-loaded the responsibility to not-for-profits and made it so difficult and cumbersome for people to receive benefits."

A few days after I saw Jones, I spoke to Doris Koo, president of Enterprise Community Partners, a nonprofit that provides development capital and expertise to help build affordable low-income housing. Until the Reagan era, this, too, had been a responsibility of government. As funding for public housing dwindled, an alternative system of tax credits was established that offered investors incentives to float capital to nonprofit developers constructing housing for the poor. A $9 billion industry quietly arose that has poured the concrete, hung the drywall and placed hundreds of thousands of tenants in decentralized low-income housing units, hardly enough to meet the overall demand but a significant achievement that many view as an improvement over the large, crime-infested projects that used to be the only option for the poor.

Last year, however, the flow of capital suddenly dried up, turning a $9 billion industry into a $4 billion one and leaving nonprofit developers with half-finished projects that are in limbo. "What we've got are these diligent community-based organizations in New Orleans, Harlem and the Bronx that are in a twilight zone situation," said Koo. "They have a debt obligation, and they've acquired land that can produce no income because they can't finish the project—there's zero capital."

"So groups are panicking," she went on. "Some are coming to us to ask for extensions on loans, some are selling anything they can to raise capital to finish their projects—many of which are shovel-ready—and some have gone under." The story illustrates how much community-based nonprofits can achieve, but also how vulnerable they can be to the vagaries of the market. What might save some of those shovel-ready projects? As it happens, $2.25 billion will soon begin flowing to states through something called the HOME Investment Partnerships Program, which draws its funding from a much-vilified source that many bankers and investors have lately come to view in a more positive light: the federal government. ■

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Fixing the Fed

To restore the nation's broken financial system, Washington must reform the Federal Reserve.

by WILLIAM GREIDER

Congress and the Obama administration face an excruciating dilemma. To restore the crippled financial system, they are told, they must put up still more public money—hundreds of billions more—to rescue the largest banks and investment houses from failure. Even the dimmest politicians realize that this will further inflame the public's anger. People everywhere grasp that there is something morally wrong about bailing out the malefactors who caused this catastrophe. Yet we are told we have no choice. Unless taxpayers assume the losses for the largest financial institutions by buying their rotten assets, the banking industry will not resume normal lending and, therefore, the economy cannot recover.

This is a false dilemma. Other choices are available. Throwing more public money at essentially insolvent banks is like giving blood transfusions to a corpse and hoping for Lazarus—or, as banking analyst Christopher Whalen puts it, pouring water into a bucket with a hole in the bottom. So far Washington has poured nearly $300 billion into the bucket, and Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner has suggested it may take another $1 trillion or more to complete the banks' resurrection. The president has budgeted $750 billion for the task. Morality aside, that sounds nutty.

Here is a very different way to understand the problem: to restore the broken financial system, Washington has to fix the Federal Reserve. Though this is not widely understood, the central bank has lost its ability to govern the credit system—the nation's overall lending and borrowing. The Fed's control mechanisms have been severely undermined by a generation of deregulation and tricky innovations that have substantially shifted credit functions from traditional banks to lightly regulated financial markets. When the Fed tried to apply its old tools, starting in the 1980s, the credit system perversely produced opposite results—an explosion of debt the policy-makers could not restrain. In its present condition, the Fed may even make things worse.

Instead of frankly acknowledging the problem, Fed governors proceeded in the past two decades to engineer exaggerated swings in monetary policy—raising interest rates, then lowering them, in widening extremes. This led to the series of bubbles in financial prices—first stocks, then housing and commodities—that collapsed with devastating consequences, climaxing in the present crisis. In other words, the central bank's weakened condition and its misguided policy decisions have been a central factor in destabilizing the American economy. More to the point, the Fed's operating disorders are directly threatening to recovery; the economy is not likely to get well if the dysfunctional Fed is not also reformed.

In this crisis the central bank has so far flooded credit markets and financial institutions with trillions of dollars in

CAITLIN DOVER

new liquidity and loan guarantees, which may help to stabilize credit markets. But the Fed has been unable to engineer what the economy desperately needs—renewed lending to companies and consumers that can finance renewed growth. The confused purpose of monetary policy stands in the way. The Fed could not restrain credit expansion when it was exploding, and now it cannot stimulate credit expansion when it is frozen.

This analysis is drawn from the work of Jane D'Arista, a reform-minded economist and retired professor with a deep conceptual understanding of money and credit. D'Arista proposes operating reforms at the central bank that would be powerfully stimulative for the economy and would also restore the Fed's role as the moderating governor of the credit system. The Fed, she argues, must create a system of control that will cover not only the commercial banks it already regulates but also the unregulated nonbank financial firms and funds that dispense credit in the "shadow banking system," like hedge funds and private equity firms. These and other important pools of capital displaced traditional bank lending with market securities and collaborated with major banks in evading prudential rules and regulatory limits. "Shadow banking" is, likewise, frozen by crisis.

Once the central bank has established balance sheet connections to all the important financial institutions, including insurance companies and mutual funds, it can engineer the balance sheet conditions that will virtually compel them to unfreeze lending and restart the flows of credit. This does not

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require spending vast sums of taxpayers' money. It does require the government to abandon the pretense that it is merely assisting troubled private enterprises in these difficult times. Government has to step up to this financial crisis and take charge of the solution, regardless of how it disposes of the so-called zombie banks. Otherwise, Washington, including the Fed, will be restoring a dysfunctional system that can lead to the same scandalous errors.

D'Arista, who taught at Boston University and years ago was on the staff of the House banking committee, is barely known among exalted policy-makers. But her work has a strong following among progressive economists, who recognize the originality of her thinking. For nearly fifteen years with the Financial Markets Center, a monetary policy think tank, D'Arista identified the systemic disorders emerging in domestic and international finance. She proposed timely reforms while admiring economists congratulated the Fed for creating an era of "great moderation." D'Arista, I should add, is also a published poet. Formal economists will scoff, but poets often see realities the bean counters fail to recognize.

After several decades of deregulation and misguided monetary policy, the central bank has lost its ability to govern the credit system.

Leaning With the Wind

To understand D'Arista's reform ideas, start with her devastating critique of the central bank. The Federal Reserve, she explains, has failed in its most essential function: to serve as the balance wheel that keeps economic cycles from going too far. It is supposed to be a moderating force in American capitalism on the upside and on the downside, the role popularly described as "leaning against the wind." By applying its leverage on the available supply of credit, the Fed can slow down a boom that is dangerously overwrought or, likewise, stimulate the economy if it is sinking into recession. The Fed's job, a former chairman once joked, is "to take away the punch bowl just when the party gets going." Economists know this function as "counter-cyclical policy."

The Fed not only lost control, D'Arista asserts, but its policy actions have unintentionally become "pro-cyclical"—encouraging financial excesses instead of countering the extremes. "The pattern that has developed over the last two decades," she wrote in 2008, "suggests that relying on changes in interest rates as the primary tool of monetary policy can set off pro-cyclical foreign capital flows that tend to reverse the intended result of the action taken. As a result, monetary policy can no longer reliably perform its counter-cyclical function—its raison d'être—and its attempts to do so may exacerbate instability."

Anyone familiar with the back-and-forth swings of monetary policy during recent years will recognize her point. On repeated occasions, the Fed set out to tighten the availability of credit but was, in effect, overruled by the credit markets, which instead expanded their lending and borrowing. The central bank would raise short-term interest rates to slow things down, only to see long-term borrowing rates fall in financial markets and negate the Fed's impact. These recurring contradictions were familiar to financial players but not to the general public. Fed chair Paul Volcker was stymied by expanding credit when he raised rates in 1982–84. His successor, Alan Greenspan, experienced the same frustration in 1994–95 (the beginning of the great debt bubble) and again at the end of the decade. The contradiction became more visible in 2005: Greenspan kept raising short-term interest rates in gradual steps, yet long-term rates kept falling, feeding the bubble of borrowing and inflating prices.

"Rather than restore its ability to exert direct influence over credit expansion and contraction," D'Arista wrote, "the Fed adhered to outdated tools and policies that became increasingly counterproductive. Too often its actions tended to exacerbate cyclical behavior in financial markets rather than exert counter-cyclical influence." (For her full critique, read "Setting an Agenda for Monetary Reform," a 2008 lecture at the Levy Economics Institute of Bard College, posted online at the Political Economy Research Institute's website.)

Most politicians do not even know the Fed is broken. The central bank's awesome authority is an intimidating mystery to most elected officials, and they typically defer to its oracular pronouncements. But the Federal Reserve, like all human institutions, is subject to folly and error. In fact, it has experienced colossal failure once before in its history. After the stock market crash of 1929, the Fed was utterly disgraced because its response led directly to the Great Depression. Fed governors were motivated by conservative orthodoxy and their desire to protect the profitability of the largest banks, but they misunderstood the mechanics of monetary policy and also stuck to outdated theory that produced the disastrous results. D'Arista's analysis is chilling because she suggests the modern central bank, albeit in very different circumstances, may again be pursuing wrongheaded theory, blinded by similar political biases and obsolete doctrine (for the history, see my book *Secrets of the Temple: How the Federal Reserve Runs the Country*).

When deregulation began nearly thirty years ago, some leading Fed governors, including Volcker, were aware that it would weaken the Fed's hand, and they grumbled privately. The 1980 repeal of interest-rate limits meant the central bank would have to apply the brakes longer and harder to get any response from credit markets. "The only restraining influence you have left is interest rates," one influential governor complained to me, "restraint that works ultimately by bankrupting the customer." Yet the Fed supported deregulation, partly because its most important constituency, Wall Street banking and finance, pushed for it relentlessly. Working Americans felt greater pain as a result. The central bank braked the real economy's normal growth continually in a roundabout attempt to slow down the credit markets.

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The central bank was undermined more gravely by further deregulation, which encouraged the migration of lending functions from traditional bank loans to market securities, like the bundled mortgage securities that are now rotten assets. Greenspan became an aggressive advocate of the so-called modernization that created Citigroup and the other hybridized mega-banks—the ones in deep trouble. Old-line banks lost market share to nonbanks, but they were allowed to collaborate with unregulated market players as a way to evade the limits on borrowing and risk-taking. In 1977 commercial banks held 56 percent of all financial assets. By 2007 the banking share had fallen to 24 percent.

The shrinkage meant the Fed was trying to control credit through a much smaller base of lending institutions. It failed utterly—witness the soaring debt burden and subsequent defaults. Greenspan, celebrated as the wise wizard, never acknowledged Wall Street's inflation of debt. Indeed, he attempted to slow down the economy in order to constrain the financial system's bubbles. That did not succeed either. As *Nation* readers may recall, I have more than once blistered the Fed's inept performance and blamed Greenspan's "free-market" ideological bias [see "The One-Eyed Chairman," September 19, 2005]. D'Arista's analysis goes deeper and attributes the systemic malfunctioning to the Fed's weakened control mechanisms.

Central bankers attempted to fix the problem, but they may have made it worse. In the late '80s, the Fed and Wall Street leaders, joined by foreign central banks, created an international regulatory regime that requires banks to hold greater levels of capital instead of bank reserves. Reserves are the Fed's traditional cushion for ensuring the "safety and soundness" of the system. Banks were required to post non-interest-bearing accounts on their balance sheets to backstop deposits and as the means for the central bank to brake bank lending. It was assumed that the new capital requirements would do the same. Instead, the so-called Basel Accords (named for the Bank of International Settlements in Basel, Switzerland) applied very little restraint on lending but created an unintended vulnerability for banking. The new rules have acted like a pro-cyclical force—driving banks into a deeper hole as the crisis has spread because bank capital is destroyed directly by the mounting losses from market securities. The more banks lose on their rotten assets, the more capital they have to borrow from wary investors, who understandably refuse to play. That spreads the panic and failure that governments are trying to cure with public money.

Meanwhile, acting at the behest of bankers, the Fed has practically eliminated the old safety cushion by allowing reserve levels to fall nearly to zero. Bankers complained that reserves were a drag on profits and were no longer needed given the capital rules. In a shocking new arrangement, the Fed, with approval from Congress, has started to pay interest to the banks on their reserves. The commercial banks already enjoyed privileges and protections from the government that were unavailable to any other business sector. Now they insist on getting paid for their public subsidy.

How to Restore Credit—and Credibility

In the past six months, the Fed seems to have reversed course, because bank reserves suddenly jumped tenfold in September, then doubled again by December. Skeptics may conclude that it has created a safe haven for bankers. When everything else is collapsing, banks are given risk-free assets by the Fed; then they collect income from the central bank instead of lending the funds to risky customers. If reserve balances keep growing, the deal will begin to look like hoarding.

These distorted arrangements are what D'Arista thinks must be changed to break out of the downward spiral. The all-encompassing requirement she proposes—liability reserves—would give the central bank the mechanism to inject stimulus into the credit system, into banks and nonbanks alike, funding the Fed can withdraw later if the economy no longer needs a boost. The Fed would first purchase a variety of sound financial instruments from the lending institutions and create an interest-free account that would be posted as a "liability" on the institutions' balance sheets—an obligation owed to the Fed. In order to balance this liability against the loss of income-earning assets on their books, the banks and other firms would have to use the Fed-injected money to make new loans to companies and consumers or to other banks. Either way, the Fed injection would spur lending and help unlock the paralysis in credit markets.

The Federal Reserve can unlock the paralysis in the credit markets by requiring lenders to make new loans with Fed-injected money.

In this arrangement, the Fed would remain in control, because all these transactions would be covered by a repurchase agreement requiring the bank to buy back what it sold to the Fed, on a fixed date and at the same price. The Fed could demand its money back or renew the repurchase contract at its choosing (a standard practice in Fed open-market operations). Thus, if the bank does nothing with its newly injected funds to create loans and generate more income, it will be in trouble when the repurchase contract comes due. The Fed is likewise inhibited from buying worthless junk from banks because that would ruin its balance sheet, the base for the money supply. Instead of earning risk-free income by holding idle reserves, the banking industry would abruptly feel the lash of the central bank's policy decisions—open up your wallets and start lending to more borrowers, or face consequences down the road.

But where does the Fed find the money to make all these transactions? Essentially, it creates the money. That is basically what occurs routinely whenever the central bank decides to inject new reserves into the banking system. It is accomplished with a computer keystroke crediting the money to the private bank's account (and money is extinguished whenever the Fed withdraws reserves). The mystery of money creation defies com-

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mon reason, but it works because people believe in the results. The money supply relies on the "full faith and credit" of the society at large—pure credit from the people who use the currency. The public's faith can be enlisted in the national recovery, a far better option than spending the hard-earned money that comes from taxpayers.

D'Arista's solution would create the scaffolding to impose many other regulations on the behavior of lending and borrowing. But it does not resolve the problem of what to do with zombie banks. Some of them deserve to die—right now—because they are "too big to save," as the Levy Institute puts it. Other institutions in trouble can be tightly supervised by regulators for years to come, without relieving them of their rotten assets. This will require a kind of silent forbearance that lets the bankers slowly work off their losses, but it does not dump the losses on the public. D'Arista points out that the government has done this many times in the past. The closest comparison is the Third World debt crisis during the 1980s, when some of the same major banks were under water as Latin American nations threatened massive loan defaults. A lengthy, methodical workout was managed by the Fed under Paul Volcker. It wasn't pretty, nor was it just, but the public was not really aware of the deal-making. This time, the deal is too big to hide. People see it happening and are rightly enraged.

The great virtue of D'Arista's approach is that it's forward-looking. Her focus is not on saving the largest and most culpable names at the pinnacle of the financial system but on creating the platform for a financial order composed of thousands of smaller, more deserving institutions that can serve the country more reliably. To achieve this, the Federal Reserve will have to submit to its own reckoning. By its very design, the cloistered central bank is an offense to democratic principles—and now the Fed's secretive, unaccountable political power has failed democracy again. The question of how to democratize the temple or whether to tear it down has to be on the table too, the subject of future discussion. ■

Philadelphia Rising

The mayor tries to plug a budget gap by closing libraries—and the people say, Think again.

by ROBERT S. ESHELMAN

Eleanor Childs describes herself as mostly apolitical. She votes during election time but doesn't work for any political parties or groups. Her classes of first and second graders at the small West Philadelphia elementary school where she has taught since the early 1980s have been the overwhelming focus of her strong community spirit. In early November, though, when Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter proposed permanently closing her neighborhood library, along with ten others across the city, in order to help bridge a $1 billion budget shortfall, Childs changed. "Girl, you've got to fight this," she recalls thinking. "I've got to do it, and a lot of it, because we've got to save these libraries. And that's what happened all over this city. They got a push back that was unbelievable."

In order to illustrate the impact that closure of their branch—the Charles Durham Library—would have on their community, parents and teachers at Childs's school organized Book-Trek. It began with a reading from a children's book about the negative consequences of closing libraries—a book found, ironically enough, in the Durham Library by one of the students at Childs's school. "Then," Childs says, "we got up, put our coats on, because it was cold that day, and we walked from here to the next closest library." It took the group—including students aged 3 to 10—nearly an hour. They even had a police escort to speed things up. Add another hour to browse the shelves or conduct activities with library staff, eat lunch, return to school and "that's almost your whole day," explains Childs. "So it's like a field trip. And you're not going to do that every week."

COURTESY TOM DOUGHERTY/FRIENDS OF THE FREE LIBRARY PHILADELPHIA

A sign in the Kingsessing Library, one of eleven libraries city officials had slated for closure.

According to Childs, the Durham Library is the heart of her students'—and West Philadelphia's—cultural life. She escorts her students nearly every week to the library. They all have library cards. The branch manager, Mr. Ed, often reads stories to the kids and helps them get acquainted with how to use the library system for research or simply to enjoy a

Robert S. Eshelman is an independent journalist. His articles have appeared in Abu Dhabi's the National, In These Times *and on TomDispatch.com.*

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book. "We really take advantage of the resources of the city," says Childs. "And our first neighborhood resource is the library."

West Philadelphia's Book-Trek wasn't the first, or the last, grassroots action aimed at saving the city's network of public libraries. Throughout November and December, an unprecedented amount of opposition to Nutter's closure plan emerged in nearly every neighborhood of the city, though the majority of libraries slated for closure were in poor communities. As Philadelphia faces its greatest structural crisis since the early 1990s, when it teetered on the brink of bankruptcy, citizen activists like Childs are at the forefront of the movement to save essential city services.

The backlash against Nutter's proposal began just four days after his November 6 announcement, across the city from the Durham Library, in Fishtown, a modestly gentrified neighborhood in North Philadelphia, where coffee shops, bars and art galleries have sprouted up over the past few years amid large warehouse buildings—lingering reminders of the city's industrial past. A.J. Thomson, an attorney in private practice, who was born and raised in Fishtown, immediately went to work on organizing a protest. "My personal inspiration," he says, "was knowing that there's a lot of kids in the neighborhood that use the library, and without it they won't have anywhere else to go. If they don't continue to have the opportunity to use it, then we've failed this neighborhood."

Window signs in support of the libraries began to appear, and a popular neighborhood bar displayed a huge banner denouncing the proposed library closures. A few hundred people attended the rally, netting substantial local media coverage, which helped to push the fight for branch libraries front and center as the budget debate intensified.

Residents in Southwest Philadelphia, where abandoned buildings and troubled public schools are plentiful, were organizing to save another of the city's endangered branches: the Kingsessing Library, opened in 1919 through an endowment from Andrew Carnegie. Two days after Nutter's announcement, Gregory Benjamin, a neighborhood community organizer, gathered with other Kingsessing patrons to discuss the proposed closure. "We got to talking about how the libraries were going to be shut down," he said, "and we decided that what we would do about it is have a rally. And we just started to work collectively. And the library closure issue spread through this area like wildfire."

Just days after the Fishtown protest, about 300 people turned out on the Kingsessing Library steps. It was unlike any protest the neighborhood had hosted in as long as Benjamin could recall. Young and old, black, white and Hispanic gathered. Some held signs. Others just showed up, never having been to a protest. "Before, all you heard talked about was how Kingsessing is an African-American neighborhood," Benjamin explains. "But at the rally you saw Hispanics, Caucasians and so forth. You saw people being empowered for the first time to say, We will not allow the few services that reach this neighborhood to be closed. There is no negotiation."

A week later, they gathered again. "What was really key about that rally was that it was one of the first extremely cold days, and normally people don't come out in the cold," he says. "But we had well over a hundred people; we had a really good day. We had young children reading pieces. I mean, it was just awesome."

In December, as the nascent library movement continued to grow and began to target City Hall in earnest, longtime public interest attorney Irv Ackelsberg filed suit against the city, claiming that Nutter's move to close the libraries violated a twenty-year-old city ordinance. Ackelsberg, who had previously filed cases on behalf of the city's low-income residents, was shocked by Nutter's budget cuts and moved by the amount of citywide organizing that was under way. "For a long time, Philadelphia has really been two cities," he says. "But for once it wasn't about racial difference or economic difference; all the neighborhoods rose up and came out in support of the libraries."

As Philadelphia faces its greatest structural crisis since the early 1990s, citizen activists are leading the struggle to save essential services.

Philadelphia, a city of 1.4 million, has been struggling economically since the near total loss of its once mighty manufacturing base decades ago. At 25 percent, its poverty rate is the highest among the ten largest US cities, and its level of unemployment exceeds the national average. The city's education system is a shambles: 80 percent of its public elementary schools and 50 percent of its middle and high schools do not have a functioning library. The high-school dropout rate is the second highest among large US cities. Privatization has been the dominant mantra among school administrators. The digital divide is great as well—roughly half of Philadelphia residents lack a computer or home Internet access.

The city's network of public libraries and recreation facilities, also facing significant funding cuts and closures, fulfill crucial professional, educational and recreational needs. "In some cases," says Ackelsberg, "the public libraries are the only place where people can get Internet access, the only safe place were parents can send their kids for those few hours between when they get home from work and when their kids are finished at school, the only place where one can hold a community meeting."

Spend a day in any branch library or neighborhood recreation center, particularly in the city's low-income sections, and one can quickly see the enormous role these facilities play in people's lives.

On a weekday afternoon at Kingsessing, several middle school–aged children huddle around nearly every one of the library's seven computers. Nearby, in the branch's substantially stocked children's book section, six elementary school

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kids play computer logic games programmed especially for their age group. All are part of a city-sponsored after-school program.

Public libraries also fill an important niche as greater numbers of people are turning to them for employment resources. Bill Evans, a 53-year-old telecommunications specialist and daily visitor to Kingsessing, points out that many job seekers in the area rely on the library for employment training and GED manuals, online job listings and computers in order to apply for work. Indeed, just beyond the bank of computers where the middle school kids are mingling, several bookshelves are filled with reference materials geared toward job seekers. Evans says he often lends his computer skills to those in need: "A lot of people don't know how to use the library or the computers here. So I help people write résumés or set up an e-mail account."

But in Nutter's changing Philadelphia, library patrons like Evans are feeling besieged; thus, when not aiding other library customers or leafing through a crime novel, Evans works with community activists around Kingsessing, such as Benjamin, in fighting to keep the library open.

In late January, Mayor Nutter finally acquiesced to public pressure and a court ruling in favor of Ackelsberg's class-action suit, announcing that no city library would be closed through the end of the fiscal year—June 30. But with the prospect of a second $1 billion budget shortfall, Nutter has directed city department heads to submit budget proposals that incorporate 10, 20 and 30 percent cuts. Any of these scenarios is likely to result in severe cuts to public libraries as well as other essential city services, particularly those that residents of the city's poorest neighborhoods rely on.

On a near freezing night in mid-February, an estimated 550 people gathered in a South Philadelphia middle school gymnasium to participate in the third of four city-sponsored budget forums. The series of events was billed as an opportunity for members of the public to better understand the scope of the city's fiscal crisis and to articulate their concerns about possible service cuts or tax hikes. Inside, forum attendees broke into small groups, led by professional facilitators, and were asked to put themselves in the role of balancing the city budget.

Many forum participants emerged from these breakout sessions simmering with frustration, not only at the mayor but also at the process supposedly aimed at incorporating their input. "It's a big waste of time," says Betty Beaufort. "You had to pick and choose between what to cut. But everything is too vital." Beaufort, a retired office worker, says that it was the proposal to shutter the city's libraries, including her local branch, Queen Memorial in South Philly, that got her out to the forum and to become active in the budget fight.

"The libraries are my baby. If they cut these," she asks, "what are the kids going to do this summer?" ■

Letters

(continued from page 2)

radically intensified by the economic crisis.

Business as usual leaves ad buyers spending the bulk of their money in all the wrong places—where their readers *used* to be. That will change. Eventually. Once advertisers cross the technology chasm, marketing dollars will shift. Online will see two- to fivefold increases. Print will experience an even greater lurch, requiring new models to survive.
Kevin Matthews

Kafkaesque

Egg Harbor, Wisc.
Re Alexander Provan's "An Alienation Artist" [March 2]: sadly, to most people Franz Kafka is either Gregor Samsa or Joseph K, not Mr. Everyman who in his sensitive, bewildered fashion is actually Ulysses struggling through modern times, trying to make some headway and sense of it all. The wonderful "An Imperial Message" tells us the whole tale: when it comes to understanding, we never even get beyond the courtyard. Kafka has given us back our world in story after story. From short, short pieces like "A Common Confusion" and "Up in the Gallery" to never-ending masterpieces like *The Trial*, *Amerika* and *The Castle*, this artist is the Homer of our crowded today. Anyone who has missed this genius should be prepared to laugh out loud at the rich humor, nod at the sagacity and marvel at the writing. Try "The Bucket Rider," "The Fratricide" and "An Old Manuscript."
John F. Wilson

Bye-Bye, Governors

Lincoln City, Ore.
John Nichols, in "Senate Selection Scam" [Feb. 16], says that governors should have no right to fill US Senate vacancies. He's right, but Russ Feingold's plan for a constitutional amendment is not the best way to solve this problem. In 1986 Oregon voters approved a ballot measure proposed by the legislature that mandated Senate vacancies be filled by special election, not gubernatorial appointment. In 1996, when Bob Packwood resigned from the Senate, a special primary and general election were held, and Ron Wyden was elected to take his place. Wisconsin, Alaska and Massachusetts have similar laws.

There is nothing wrong with using a constitutional amendment to right a wrong (giving 18-year-olds subject to the draft in 1972 the right to vote was a good amendment). But the bar must be set high. Senator Feingold's proposal does not meet the test. It is usually better to use the state legislative process to change policy. It is time-consuming and difficult to change things state by state, but it is worth the time. Using states as laboratories for democracy has been around for a long time, and it should stay that way.
Larry Armstrong

Clarifications & Pesky Decimals—II

In Mark Hertsgaard's March 16 "A Global Green Deal," the March 2 civil disobedience in Washington was spearheaded by Greenpeace, Rainforest Action Network, Ruckus Society and the Chesapeake Climate Action Network. In addition, Texas has potentially 45,000 megawatts of wind power, not forty-five megawatts.

In "Noted" (Feb. 25) Peter Akinola is not "an Episcopalian Archbishop"; he is Archbishop of the Anglican Church of Nigeria.

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Books & the Arts.

Sallow, Queer, Sagacious

by BRENDA WINEAPPLE

The Lincoln Anthology
Great Writers on His Life and Legacy From 1860 to Now.
Edited by Harold Holzer.
Library of America. 964 pp. $40.

Abraham Lincoln in the Post-Heroic Era
History and Memory in Late Twentieth-Century America.
By Barry Schwartz.
Chicago. 394 pp. $30.

It was "interesting," said Gertrude Stein of the Civil War, although she was far more intrigued by General Grant than Abraham Lincoln, whom she virtually ignored. She's the only one, so it seems, especially now with the bicentennial of Lincoln's birth, duly touted by committees, books and celebration, having arrived just a few weeks after President Barack Obama's historic inauguration, during which he took the oath of office using Lincoln's burgundy velvet Bible. But then Lincoln has been for a very long time enshrined as a legend, albeit a complex one, whose fate was sealed by the martyrdom that gave him to the ages, or angels, depending on how one recalls Secretary of War Edwin Stanton's tender benediction.

By 1865 the outlines of Lincoln's life were already familiar to enthusiasts and detractors alike, for Lincoln's rise to the presidency fleshed out the American dream of equal opportunity, at least for white men: born into hardscrabble poverty, his mother dead of the "milk sickness" when he was 9, and the son of a feckless or restless father (depending on your point of view), young Abe Lincoln, six-foot-four in stocking feet, read at night by the fire, etched out his thoughts on the back of a shovel and in his early years earned his keep as a farmer, rail-splitter, surveyor, ferryman, postmaster and storekeeper. By 28 he was an avid student of Blackstone's *Commentaries* and Aesop's *Fables* as well as a crackerjack lawyer and a formidable Whig leader in the Illinois House of Representatives. Galvanized by the repeal of the Missouri Compromise in 1854, he later worked assiduously in 1856 for the Republican presidential candidate, John C. Frémont, opposing the extension of slavery into the territories although, according to William Dean Howells, Lincoln's presidential campaign biographer, Lincoln was no "ultra" (i.e., abolitionist). He was, however, astute, articulate and persuasive; he launched his seven well-covered debates with Stephen Douglas for the Illinois seat in the United States Senate with the stirring "House Divided" speech: "I believe this government cannot endure, permanently half *slave* and half *free*. I do not expect the Union to be *dissolved*—I do not expect the house to *fall*—but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become *all* one thing, or *all* the other. Either the *opponents* of slavery, will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in course

DOUG CHAYKA

Brenda Wineapple's most recent book is White Heat: The Friendship of Emily Dickinson and Thomas Wentworth Higginson *(Knopf), a finalist for the 2008 National Book Critics Circle Award for biography.*

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of ultimate extinction; or its *advocates* will push it forward, till it shall become alike lawful in *all* the States, old as well as new—*North* as well as *South*."

This was a man to be reckoned with. Though provincial, depressive and ugly, he was able to help the Union win the Civil War with words. He could speak; he could write; he was quick on his feet. He could stir multitudes. Yet, as Edmund Wilson once quipped, there is "more romantic and sentimental rubbish [about Lincoln] than about any other American figure, with the possible exception of Edgar Allan Poe."

Wilson's remark can be found in one of the most delightful books commemorating Lincoln this season, the Library of America's *Lincoln Anthology: Great Writers on His Life and Legacy From 1860 to Now*. Intelligently and enthusiastically edited by Lincoln scholar Harold Holzer, who not coincidentally serves as co-chair of the United States Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission, the anthology contains a smart historical introduction followed by informed headnotes to the 900 subsequent pages of Lincolniana, all arranged chronologically: reminiscences of and responses to the sixteenth president by novelists, biographers, poets, playwrights and politicians who range from William Cullen Bryant to Langston Hughes, from Henrik Ibsen to W.E.B. Du Bois, from Julia Ward Howe to Gore Vidal, and from Ralph Waldo Emerson to Barack Obama, who ends the volume.

A delicious smorgasbord, *The Lincoln Anthology* also contains many of Lincoln's own words as well as such exceptional expositors of them as Jacques Barzun, Marianne Moore and Garry Wills, who brilliantly analyzes the Gettysburg Address and memorably calls Lincoln "a Transcendentalist without the fuzziness." Some contributors, alas, fall short of such stylistic panache, particularly when they wrap Lincoln in fictional clothes and set him a'courting the doomed Ann Rutledge, about whom very little is known, and then plunk him down, copiously weeping, at her grave. Stephen Vincent Benét impersonates Lincoln's voice; Rosemary Benét, the voice of his mother; Norman Corwin speaks for Stephen Douglas's wife, Adele; and Irving Stone embarrassingly imagines a sexy Mary Todd after a bath. We have, it seems to me, strayed far afield, and so return with relief to Shelby Foote, whose novelistic flamboyance at least serves history, not the other way around.

But taken together, these marvelous selections show how the idea of Lincoln has changed and yet holds the imagination in thrall: somewhat equivocally, Hawthorne thought Lincoln looked like a country schoolmaster, though he decided that, "on the whole, I liked this sallow, queer, sagacious visage, with the homely human sympathies that warmed it." Journalist Henry Villard, who also liked him, nonetheless said Lincoln was not firm; "the times demand a Jackson." Well-forgotten hagiographers such as Edmund Clarence Stedman cried out for vengeance after the assassination of the man Melville called The Martyr. Karl Marx said Lincoln was sui generis; Harriet Beecher Stowe, that he was "*a man of the working classes*." Edwin Markham insisted "the color of the ground was in him," and nothing surpasses the elegiac beauty of Whitman's "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd."

Within this great din of voices is an argument over Lincoln's support of emancipation.

Dissenters are no less Lincoln-struck. Mencken, who admired him, also regarded the Gettysburg Address as nonsensical, and poet and pacifist Robert Lowell denounced a Lincoln he could not shake: "*J'accuse*, *j'accuse*, *j'accuse*, *j'accuse*, *j'accuse*!" Delmore Schwartz found him a "tricky lawyer" made into a "prairie Christ" by the inevitable Carl Sandburg, Lincoln mythologizer par excellence, who, among other exercises, recited the Gettysburg Address on *The Ed Sullivan Show*. The five Sandburg entries prove Edmund Wilson right again: "there are moments when one is tempted to feel that the cruellest thing that has happened to Lincoln since he was shot by Booth has been to fall into the hands of Carl Sandburg."

Above all, though, what emerges from this great din of voices is the argument over Lincoln's foot-dragging support of emancipation. "We complain that you, Mr. President, elected as a Republican, knowing well what an abomination Slavery is, and how emphatically it is the core and essence of this atrocious Rebellion, seem never to interfere with those atrocities," wrote Horace Greeley in the *New York Tribune* in 1862. Answering Greeley point by point, Lincoln reminded the editor, and hence the nation, that "I have here stated my purpose according to my views of official duty, and I intend no modification of my oft-expressed personal wish that all men everywhere be free." His official duty, however, had nothing to do with slavery. "My paramount object in this struggle *is* to save the Union, and is *not* either to save or to destroy slavery."

As Mark Twain would say of Huck Finn, Lincoln was a man of sound heart and deformed conscience, if, that is, we take "conscience" to mean the political will of the nation, which Lincoln defined as "a universal feeling, whether well or ill-founded, [that] can not be safely disregarded." Universal sentiment in antebellum America did not list toward abolition, as even the Emancipation Proclamation makes clear, and Lincoln's conscience, as Frederick Douglass declared, was, from that standpoint, lily-livered: "Viewed from the genuine abolition ground, Mr. Lincoln seemed tardy, cold, dull, and indifferent."

Still, it seems his heart was right. Even Douglass conceded that: "Measuring him by the sentiment of his country, a sentiment he was bound as a statesman to consult, he was swift, zealous, radical, and determined." Several of the anthology's authors also quote Lincoln's letter to his friend Joshua Speed in which he declares, with some heat, that "as a nation, we began by declaring that 'all men are created equal.' We now practically read it 'all men are created equal, except negroes.' When the Know-Nothings get control, it will read 'all men are created equal, except negroes, and foreigners, and Catholics.' When it comes to this, I should prefer emigrating to some country where they make no pretense of loving liberty—to Russia, for instance, where despotism can be taken pure, and without the base alloy of hypocrisy." Yet Lincoln had also told Speed, regarding the Fugitive Slave Law, that though "I hate to see the poor creatures hunted down…I bite my lip and keep quiet."

What we learn, then, is that Lincoln was and remains many things to many people. With his emphasis on competitive individualism, hard work and the right to enjoy the fruits of one's labor, he incarnates the spirit of American meritocracy: an unwashed, ambitious boy from Kentucky rises from log cabin to the presidency without the aid of family name, connections or even knockdown good looks and commits himself to saving a nation that affords opportunity to others. In 1907 Twain wisely called him a "man of the border"—a house divided, in other words. "He exhibited not his own moral ambiguity but the moral ambiguity of the political order itself," Reinhold Niebuhr later concluded.

Less circumspect, Lerone Bennett Jr. cogently argued in 1968 that Lincoln was a

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"white supremacist with good intentions" who, apart from the issue of slavery, ignored blacks. Yet in 2007 Barack Obama launched his presidential campaign by referring to the Lincoln who moved a nation and helped free the enslaved. To that nation he belongs "because men and women of every race, from every walk of life, continued to march for freedom long after Lincoln was laid to rest," said Obama, "today we have the chance to face the challenges of this millennium together, as one people."

The tall, brooding and mythic image of Lincoln sells American presidents to the public and to themselves. When under pressure (when not?), Richard Nixon said he sat at the table where Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, and prayed for guidance; Dwight D. Eisenhower, after his election, handed out snapshots of Lincoln's portrait as Christmas gifts. The Lincoln molded by and for the ages, and in particular by and for modern times, is the subject of Barry Schwartz's *Abraham Lincoln in the Post-Heroic Era: History and Memory in Late Twentieth-Century America*, a sociological study of Lincoln's perennial presence but diminishing prestige in the second half of the twentieth century.

Professor emeritus of sociology at the University of Georgia, Schwartz explains that as the beneficiary of the Progressive Era, Lincoln had symbolized reconciliation between North and South—not racial equality—during the early part of the century. Harold Holzer also demonstrates as much, noting that when Robert Russa Moton of the Tuskegee Institute was asked to speak at the dedication of the Lincoln Memorial in 1922, Chief Justice William Howard Taft, chair of the Memorial Commission, advised Moton to tamp down his criticism of race relations. (*The Lincoln Anthology* includes Moton's previously unpublished address, excised portions added.) But according to Schwartz, the Great Depression refitted Lincoln the Reconciler as a Rooseveltian Common Man battling for the social good, and on behalf of (white) wage slaves. In fact, Robert Sherwood, Roosevelt's speechwriter, won a Pulitzer Prize for his play *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* (also excerpted in *The Lincoln Anthology*), in which Lincoln appears as a Midwesterner of egalitarian spirit, opposed to slavery, committed to "our democratic system" and a citizen of the world, not an isolationist, ready to resist all forms of despotism.

Unsurprisingly, Lincoln's image helped sell war bonds, his words were quoted to comfort the bereft and, depicted as the Man of Sorrows, he wept for soldiers and civilians alike. Schwartz notes that Aaron Copland's *Lincoln Portrait*, an orchestral piece accompanied by readings from Lincoln's speeches, was one of the most popular wartime productions. But nothing reveals the plastic nature of the Lincoln legacy more than the civil rights movement. Embraced by liberals, the Great Emancipator was also hailed as a gradualist by Republicans who believed that *Brown v. Board of Education* had gone too far and as a segregationist by Southern Democrats who liked to quote Lincoln's response to Stephen Douglas "that I am not, nor ever have been in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races."

Schwartz says egalitarianism has eroded Lincoln's prestige but not our admiration of him.

Schwartz also argues that with the advent of radio and movies, Lincoln became more of a national than a regional figure. A hybrid of Southern, Northern, white, black, conservative and liberal views, he now pleased most of the people most of the time. As W.E.B. Du Bois pointed out as early as 1922, Lincoln was "cruel, merciful; peace-loving, a fighter; despising Negroes and letting them fight and vote; protecting slavery and freeing slaves."

Yet despite the nation's perennial fascination with Lincoln, Schwartz also contends that Lincoln's prestige has diminished partly because the very idea of greatness itself, particularly national greatness, has petered out. Celebrities, especially entertainers and actors, have replaced "great men," he contends. "The postmodern era" is "a post-heroic era." But by documenting this proposition with a series of tables showing respondents (differentiated, say, by race and region) who did and did not designate Lincoln as one of America's three greatest presidents; with charts and graphs that enumerate the entries per year for Lincoln in the *New York Times* or the *Reader's Guide* and the *Congressional Record*; and with an impressive set of amusing illustrations of Lincoln (paired with Marilyn Monroe, for example, or naked, or hard-drinking, or in drag), Schwartz inadvertently recalls a golden age of sociology, long since passed. For instead of Max Weber, Emile Durkheim, Talcott Parsons, Robert Jay Lifton or Erving Goffman (all cited), we are left with a cardboard prose replete with terms (explicated by Schwartz) such as "keying" or "framing": "'Keying'…shapes the meaning of current events by matching them with events of the past." The lecture, along with the bevy of surveys and statistical appendices, buries the argument.

Yet there's plenty to ponder. When Schwartz defines the post-heroic era as "a stable, post-industrial democracy [that] no longer requires great men and women to revere, no longer inspires their appreciation, no longer can find a place for them," he does not suggest it's a bad thing. The postmodern or post-heroic era is also an age of diversity (positive) but without political consensus (somewhat negative); an era of particularisms (not so hot), but of dignity (good) and "critical thinking" (very good). Moreover, Schwartz contends that the so-called appreciation of great men also thrives in a system of social and political inequity; when great men serve the status quo, their putative eminence diminishes everyone else's. Egalitarianism, Schwartz concludes, has eroded Lincoln's prestige but not our admiration for him, because we no longer believe in history's grand narratives and now assume our great women and men have feet of clay. Lincoln may now be admired, lampooned, investigated, criticized and commemorated but not revered in this, the era of fallen heroes. Oddly, though, these heroes are confined to American presidents. Perhaps, then, the era is not post-heroic; it's the presidents who have grown small.

Schwartz makes scant reference to President Obama, likely because his book was finished before Obama was elected, but one cannot help but wonder what Obama's almost compulsive reinvigoration of Lincoln bodes for post-heroic politics. The presidential inauguration drew more than a million people to Washington. The heroic seems to have made a comeback, if only for a little while and in a different guise. "As Lincoln organized the forces arrayed against slavery," Obama declared in Springfield, "he was heard to say: 'Of strange, discordant, and even hostile elements, we gathered from the four winds, and formed and fought to battle through.' That is our purpose here today." As Obama spoke, the post-post-heroic crowd cheered, wanting very much to believe in greatness—Lincoln's, Obama's, its own—once more. That too shall prove, as Gertrude Stein would say, interesting. ■

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BACK TALK

ADRIAN BELLESGUARD

Elaine Showalter

Elaine Showalter, professor emeritus of English at Princeton University, is a pioneer of women's studies and feminist literary criticism. Her new book is *A Jury of Her Peers: American Women Writers from Anne Bradstreet to Annie Proulx* (Knopf, $30). Focusing on published works, not diaries or private letters, it's the first literary history of American female authors. —*Christine Smallwood*

What were the biggest surprises you found while researching?

The most important thing for me, and this was a motive for the book, is how good the writing is. I found so much amazing material. This is not about special pleading or making a case for women writers as culturally significant. This is great writing! The second thing was various historical moments that emerged as very significant for women's writing. The Revolutionary War was a tremendous impetus. It's quite astonishing how many books by American women have scenes on July 4, what a key moment it is for them in terms of self-definition.

Were there particular periods of note?

The 1850s, which has always been seen as the moment when American literature comes into its own, but in male terms—the decade of Hawthorne, Whitman, Emerson and Melville. It's a decade in which women writers emerge in every genre; you see African-American women writers appearing. Specific dates within the 1850s are important—the trial and the execution of John Brown, the founding of *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1857, which established a division between popular and elite literature. It wasn't that women weren't published in *The Atlantic Monthly*—they were. But it was the beginning of a quite prolonged period in which elite publications were controlled by male editors and women were struggling to be accepted by them, and very much internalizing and even fantasizing about their standards. And when you get to the twentieth century, there's a long period where it's *Partisan Review* for intellectuals and then, of course, *The New Yorker*, which continues to occupy that place. And it's funny because you read in women's private diaries, they have dreams about these magazines. Sylvia Plath had a dream one night that she was in bed with *Partisan Review*. But that division between elite and popular literature was very damaging for women in terms of their reputation and their place in American literary history.

This is a long book. Do you expect people to read it from beginning to end, or to dip in and out?

People can decide for themselves. I hope that some people will use it as a reference book and that they'll take off from it, but there is a story here, a beginning and a middle and an end. The lives of the women themselves are so fascinating, like Julia Ward Howe. She wrote "Battle Hymn of the Republic"; that's what everyone knows. But she was an amazing poet. She published her first book of poems in 1853, anonymously. It was called *Passion-Flowers*, and a lot of it was about her marriage, which was not happy. When the book came out it was a huge success—Hawthorne said he esteemed Howe above all other women poets. Everybody knew who she was because it was a pretty small scene. It was a huge scandal, and then her husband found out—she had not shown it to him—and he threatened to divorce her and take custody of their children if she ever wrote anything like that again. She did write a lot, but she never wrote poems like that again. She also was writing a novel, which she never even tried to publish, which was about a hermaphrodite named Larry.

What's the state of academic feminist literary criticism?

The achievements have been formidable internationally, and one of the effects was, in comparison to the research that I did on British women writers back in the 1970s, doing the research on American women writers was a lot easier. So much more is in print. So much is catalogued. So much has been edited. And there is the miracle of the Internet. Astonishing quantities of literature have been digitized, and I was able to do so much of my research sitting at my desk. On the other hand, ideologically, I think we have really come to a kind of impasse. Things had become so fragmented and so politicized in terms of the need to represent every element—the diversity was really the dominant value, rather than quality. I think diversity and quality can coexist. I said, OK, this is my view, these are my judgments; here they are, you can argue with them. But I think it's important to start from a place where you can argue. Literature isn't about complacency and agreement. What keeps a writer readable is being open to these kinds of debates about their value as well as their content.

You're a popular critic too. Any thoughts about book reviewing?

I'm very, very sad about the closing of the *Washington Post Book World* and the redistribution of it, should we say, online. I spend almost half the year in London, where this hasn't happened to such a degree. All the daily newspapers have book reviews several times a week. And on Saturday there's the *Guardian Review*, which I think is the greatest stand-alone book review in the world. There's the *TLS*, the *London Review of Books*, magazines, radio programs, even TV programs where books are still so much at the center of culture and so much a part of people's conversation. I don't understand why we can't do that in the United States. It's partly, obviously, an economic problem. I also think that book reviewing in London is more entrepreneurial and creative than it's been here. The inventiveness and humor and wit of something like the *Guardian Review* could really make a difference to book reviewing here, which is still a pretty serious—let's abandon all jokes, ye who enter here—straightforward and kind of elitist occupation. British reviewing: there are so many reviews of any given book that no one cares if the reviewer knows the person, is a former lover, a former enemy. Literary culture feeds literature. The disappearance of reviewing here is a very ominous note about what's going to happen in the culture. ■

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LESLIE STRAUSS TRAVIS

Norman Maclean teaching English 237, his popular course on Shakespeare, at the University of Chicago in January 1970

A Tough Flower Girl

by PHILIP CONNORS

I know it's uncool to admit an enthusiasm based in part on biography—it seems so *louche*—but I feel as if I've been following in Norman Maclean's footsteps much of my life. Like him, I was born in Iowa and left at a young age; like him, I lived a portion of my early life in Missoula, Montana. I have, like him, worked as a fire lookout in the West, with a view of "more mountains in all directions than I was ever to see again—oceans of mountains," as Maclean wrote in "USFS 1919: The Ranger, the Cook, and a Hole in the Sky"; and I have fished rivers and creeks sparkling with the movement of cutthroat trout, per his instructions. Maclean spent his life attempting to reconcile his love of Chicago with his love of Montana, as I have mine for New York and New Mexico.

About once a year I still reach for my dog-eared copy of *A River Runs Through It and Other Stories*, and it never loses its power or its mystery. No other book I know has more evangelists, as it would have to, being a collection of two novellas and a story published by a university press, and now with beyond a million copies in print. My deep connection with the book—with the leisurely rhythms of the sentences, which matched the rhythms of my childhood spent fishing with my brother—had already blurred the distinction between life and literature, although of course I never suspected the book would one day prove prophetic. But it did twelve years ago, when, just as Norman loses his brother Paul to a violent death, a brother he loved but did not understand and could not help, I lost my own brother, at the age of 22, to a suicide with a semiautomatic rifle.

I'm not sure any sense can be made of his action, and anyway the details are not my concern here. But I do often find myself in the same position as Norman and his father, asking unanswerable questions, searching for something, some bit of redeeming truth to reckon with. There is a scene near the end of the title novella, in which the two of them talk about their son and brother.

"Do you think I could have helped him?" Norman's father asks.

"Do you think I could have helped him?" Norman answers.

They stand silently, each of them waiting for an answer they know will never come. "How can a question be answered that asks a lifetime of questions?" Norman wonders.

Maclean would report receiving letters from people like me during the fourteen years he had left after the book was published in 1976. And he would go to his grave secure in the knowledge that anyone who'd fished with a fly in the Rockies and read his novella on the how and why of it believed it to be the best such manual on the art ever written—a remarkable feat for a piece of prose that also stands as a masterwork in the art of tragic writing.

Maclean, who was born in 1902, learned to write from his father, a Presbyterian minister who taught his son at home until he was 10. The morning was divided into three hourlong periods, during each of which Norman gave a fifteen-minute recitation. His father's highest ideals were economy and precision with the English language; he wanted his son to grow up as an authentic American, with a mastery of the American written word. In the afternoons Maclean fished and played in the woods and learned how to be tough, toughness being one of the chief preoccupations of his late-life writing.

As a teenager he worked summers with the US Forest Service, then less than two decades old, an opportunity he was afforded because able-bodied woodsmen had gone to fight in World War I. In 1920 he went east to college at Dartmouth, to study English. When he finished, he returned home to Montana and worked again briefly in the mountains of his youth. It was a moment that divided his past and his future forever. He often looked back at a career that might have been—a career in the woods, in logging camps, fighting fires and packing mules and playing cribbage in the bunkhouse. Instead he went to the University of Chicago, where he earned his doctorate and later held the post of William Rainey Harper Professor of English. He taught there more than forty years, mostly Shakespeare and the Romantic poets, and decamped from Hyde Park for Montana each summer, where he spent three months at his family's cabin on Seeley Lake.

His career is one of the strangest in American letters. Maclean began to write fiction only upon retirement, when he had "reached his biblical allotment of three score years and ten," as he liked to put it. He claimed he picked up his pen at the urging of his two children, Jean and John, who wished to know what he and the world were like when he was young. The initial result, two years in the making, was *A River Runs Through It*, which came out of nowhere, the first and for a long time the only book of fiction to be published by the University of Chicago Press. The book's two novellas and short story ("Logging and Pimping and 'Your Pal, Jim'") are set in Montana in the early twentieth century, all heavily autobiographical—tales he playfully called "Western stories with trees in them for children, experts, scholars, wives of scholars, and scholars who are poets."

The book was short listed for a Pulitzer in 1977, although the judges that year deemed no book worthy of the award and abstained from offering a prize in fiction. In later years Maclean had cause to wonder if the judges maybe didn't like trees. That's the excuse one New York publisher offered

The Norman Maclean Reader
Edited by O. Alan Weltzien.
Chicago. 260 pp. $27.50.

Philip Connors is a former Nation *intern whose essays have appeared in* n+1, The Paris Review *and the* London Review of Books. *He is at work on a book about his time as a fire lookout, to be published by Ecco.*

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in rejecting the book—"these stories have trees in them"—a fact that gave Maclean great satisfaction in his final years. After the smash success of the book, an editor at Knopf, which had rejected the manuscript, wrote to inquire whether the house might have a look at Maclean's second novel, on which he was rumored to be at work.

"I don't know how this ever happened, but this fell right into my hands," Maclean says in an interview reprinted in *The Norman Maclean Reader*, the capstone to his peculiar career, which contains an unfinished book manuscript, several essays and interviews and a selection of unpublished letters. "So I wrote a letter.... I can remember the last paragraph: 'If it should ever happen that the world comes to a place when Alfred A. Knopf is the only publishing company left and I am the only author, then that will be the end of the world of books.'" It seems in some way appropriate that he did not live to see his final book, *Young Men and Fire*, win the National Book Critics Circle Award for nonfiction, in 1992, although his acceptance speech no doubt would have been one to remember, if he'd chosen to give it. Having begun to write so late in life, he was not angling for prizes.

It's not as if Maclean didn't know his stories were strange. He often said he wrote them in part so the world would know of what artistry men and women were capable in the woods of his youth, before helicopters and chain saws rendered obsolete the ancient skills of packing with mules and felling trees with crosscut saws. Artistry, specifically artistry with one's hands, was for him among life's most refined achievements. As he says in the opening pages of "A River Runs Through It," "all good things—trout as well as eternal salvation—come by grace and grace comes by art and art does not come easy." Among the many things that make the novella charmingly weird is how it begins with a long piece of expository prose on how to cast a fly with a four-and-a-half-ounce rod—an opening almost Modernist in its diffidence to the rituals of storytelling, as if begging for attrition from the uncommitted. Once he is assured you are with him, however, he then shows you, as the story progresses, how to make more specialized casts, how to read a river and see where the trout live, how to choose the correct fly to entice them and, finally, how to land a big fish once you've hooked it. All the while, he is mingling comedy and tragedy, and making metaphors of surpassing beauty, often while hinting at his brother's coming doom:

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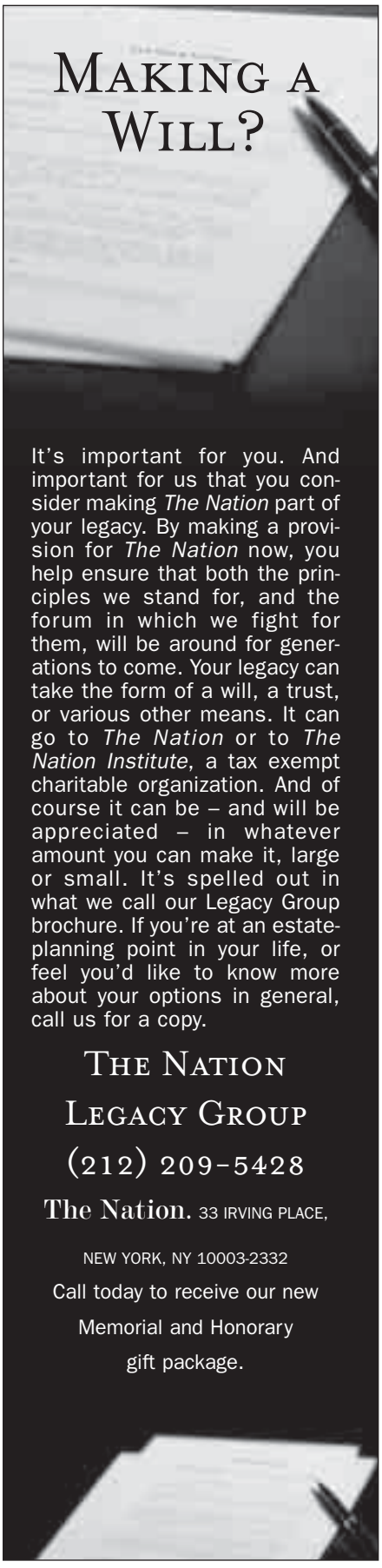
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As the heat mirages on the river in front of me danced with and through each other, I could feel patterns from my own life joining them. It was here, while waiting for my brother, that I started this story, although, of course, at the time I did not know that stories of life are more often like rivers than books. But I knew a story had begun, perhaps long ago near the sound of water. And I sensed that ahead I would meet something that would never erode so there would be a sharp turn, deep circles, a deposit, and quietness.

In a story in which every piece is irregular and every piece fits with every other, it is no accident that the final line is this: "I am haunted by waters." If, as Chekhov said, the object is not to paint a picture of the moon in the sky but in a piece of broken glass, Maclean had learned from his masters and, being tough, picked up the jagged shard and used it as a knife.

If "A River Runs Through It" lightly fictionalized Maclean's life story, *Young Men and Fire* offered him a chance to explore the other life he might have lived, the life of a Forest Service firefighter. In "Black Ghost," which appears again in the *Reader*, having served as the prologue to *Young Men and Fire*, Maclean recounts his arrival at a scene of conflagration along the Missouri River in August 1949, with the fire still burning in stump holes and scattered trees. The smell and the look of the gulch in which the fire blew up haunted him the rest of his life. The book is, in one sense, the story of an unforeseen disaster, in which smoke jumpers accustomed to unifying earth, wind and fire found themselves overwhelmed by that final element, which they could not outrun. It is also, as Maclean put it, a story in search of itself as a story—or, to say it another way, a tragedy in search of a tragedian. He spent most of the last fourteen years of his life on it, and the typescript remained unfinished at his death.

His description of the gulch after the fire offers a sense of how he managed a poetically laconic style that was also occasionally religious in tone, suffused with images he absorbed in his youth as the child of a preacher:

> Nearly half a mile away the [rescue] crew could hear Hellman shouting for water. In the valley of ashes there was another sound—the occasional explosion of a dead tree that would blow to pieces when its resin became so hot it passed the point of ignition. There was little left alive to be frightened by the explosions. The rattlesnakes were dead or swimming the Missouri. The deer were also dead or swimming or euphoric. Mice and moles came out of their holes and, forgetting where their holes were, ran into the fire. Following the explosion that sent the moles and ashes running, a tree burst into flames that almost immediately died. Then the ashes settled down again to rest until they rose in clouds when the crew passed by.

"In the valley of ashes"—the phrase reminiscent of *The Great Gatsby*—is in this instance meant to evoke the biblical valley of the shadow of death, as indeed Mann Gulch appeared to be and smelled on that August afternoon when a fire whirl caught thirteen men as they ran for their lives uphill. Maclean also returns repeatedly to a version of the event as a kind of Passion play, with Stations of the Cross scattered up the hill, marked now by literal crosses where each of the dead men fell, monuments to their unimaginable end. With dogged precision he taught himself the latest wildfire science, coaxed a friend to help him mark time on the hill and read and reread the official report on the fire, with its details about the recollections of the three survivors, two of whom he led back to the scene to revisit their close encounter with death. The smoke jumpers' foreman, Wag Dodge, had lit an escape fire and lay down in its ashes as the larger fire whirl passed over his men: he tried in vain to persuade them to join him, the only hope for survival most of them had, though none of them listened. He would die five years later, haunted by his inability to show his men the way to their afterlife beyond the fire. Although Maclean never says so explicitly, Dodge resembles a kind of Jesus figure, misunderstood in his message at the moment it counted most for the world, that world for Dodge consisting of young men running uphill in a gulch and a fire running faster forever and ever.

Maclean claimed in interviews to be essentially agnostic. But prayer and biblical language still formed for him a coherent vision of the world and supplied the images he would use to great effect in all his work. Watching his brother Paul fish in "A River Runs Through It," he sees him in terms that are potent in their ambiguity:

> Below him was the multitudinous river, and, where the rock had parted it around him, big-grained vapor rose. The mini-molecules of water left in

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> the wake of his line made momentary loops of gossamer, disappearing so rapidly in the rising big-grained vapor that they had to be retained in memory to be visualized as loops. The spray emanating from him was finer-grained still and enclosed him in a halo of himself. The halo of himself was always there and always disappearing, as if he were candlelight flickering about three inches from himself. The images of himself and his line kept disappearing into the rising vapors of the river, which continually circled to the tops of the cliffs where, after becoming a wreath in the wind, they became rays of the sun.

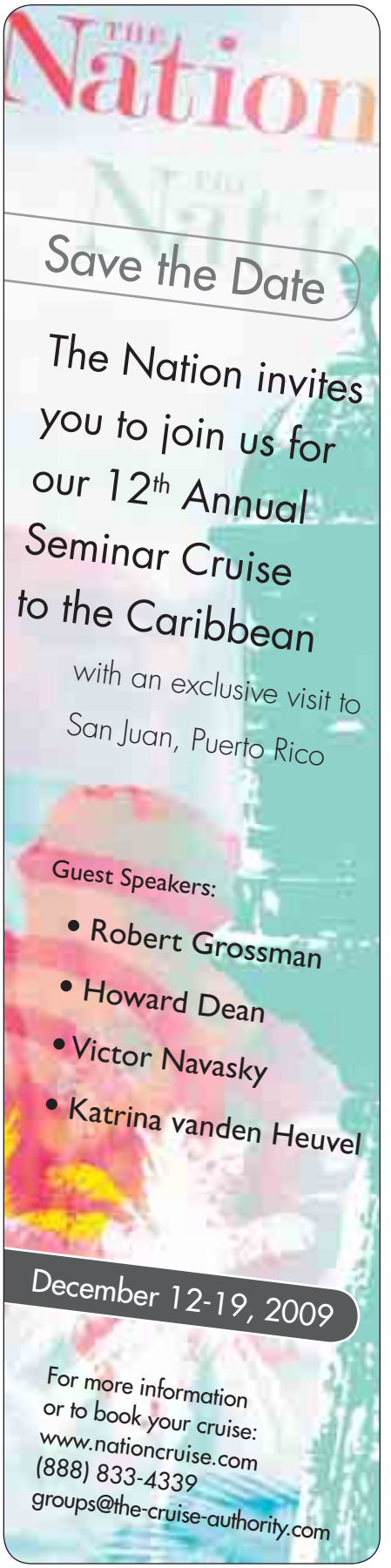
That halo, always there and always disappearing, becomes the perfect metaphor for Paul: a man of great artistry and beauty with a fly rod in his hand, always in possession of that artistry but not always in a position to use it, and doomed to a tragedy that occurred in a moment outside his sphere of artistry. Eventually he will disappear altogether into the mystery of himself. One other potent symbol in his story—again redolent of the story of Christ—is the right hand with which he casts his fly. We see it again and again in the course of the novella, bigger and more powerful than his left, until it becomes a foregone conclusion that it will have a role in his end. The only solace Norman and his father can take from his death is that nearly all the fingers of that hand were broken when his body was found dumped in an alley, a sign that he had died fighting, a fact Norman must repeat more than once. The hand, in conversation between Norman and his father, becomes a thing they continually inspect, just as Thomas had to inspect the hand of Jesus to prove to himself that Jesus had returned from the dead.

Having begun to write so late in life, Maclean confined his energies to what his idol Wordsworth called "spots of time"—those moments when his life soared above the humdrum and took on the shape and beauty of a story. This gave him the head start he needed, aware as he was that his time for creation was short. Again and again in his work, he makes allusions to such moments: "Poets talk about 'spots of time,' but it is really fishermen who experience eternity compressed into a moment," he writes in "A River Runs Through It." In the later novella "USFS 1919: The Ranger, the Cook, and a Hole in the Sky," his reminiscence of his work as a fire lookout in the early Forest Service, he put it this way: "Life every now and then becomes literature—not for long, of course, but long enough to be what we best remember, and often enough so that what we eventually come to mean by life are those moments when life, instead of going sideways, backwards, forward, or nowhere at all, lines out straight, tense and inevitable, with a complication, climax, and, given some luck, a purgation, as if life had been made and not happened." Finally, in *Young Men and Fire*, he offers what is by now a more crystallized statement of the same view: "Far back in the impulses to find this story is a storyteller's belief that at times life takes on the shape of art and that the remembered remnants of these moments are largely what we come to mean by life."

As *The Norman Maclean Reader* illuminates, Maclean was attracted not only to spots of time but to tragedies of overconfidence. The first section of the book contains five chapters of a study he began in the 1950s on the battle at Little Bighorn, a book he never finished, although his fascination with what happened to Custer on that hill never left him. That fascination revolved, as he put it, around "how hidden we keep certain aspects of defeat from ourselves," not aware until too late that our defeat is imminent. He mentions the battle more than once in both "A River Runs Through It" and *Young Men and Fire*; in the second instance he sees a kinship between the crosses marking the spots where thirteen young smoke jumpers met their death and the memorials to the dead at Little Bighorn:

> In the dry grass on both hills are white scattered markers where the bodies were found, a special cluster of them just short of the top, where red terror closed in from behind and above and from the sides. The bodies were of those who were young and thought to be invincible by others and themselves. They were the fastest the nation had in getting to where there was danger, they got there by moving in the magic realm between heaven and earth, and when they got there they almost made a game of it. None were surer they couldn't lose than the Seventh Cavalry and the Smokejumpers.

It seems now, as editor O. Alan Weltzien points out in his introduction to the *Reader*, that the story of Custer's defeat was too impersonal for Maclean to wring from it everything he wanted in a story. In one of the chapters of the aborted book, in fact, Maclean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comes close to defining the philosophy of storytelling that would guide his efforts much later: "No literary sense is deeper than the one that recognizes the emotions most inherent in an actual situation and then does everything in its power to preserve this emotional unity and to magnify its impact by addition, subtraction, and embroidery." Addition, subtraction and embroidery: these were the recipe for the compressed and poetical stories he achieved in *A River Runs Through It*. His major problem in the writing of the Custer story was that it was too removed in history, too layered in mythology, for him to excavate the emotions inherent in the battle; he simply stalled out in frustration. Only when he turned, two decades later, to events from his own life did he find himself able to write by his creed.

"If an author writes out of a full heart and rhythms don't come with it," Maclean once said, "then something is missing inside the author. Perhaps a full heart." He often said his father had wanted him to be tough, his mother had wanted him to be a flower girl, and so he ended up a tough flower girl. His message is certainly tough—"there's a lot of tragedy in the universe that has missing parts and comes to no conclusion, including probably the tragedy that awaits you and me"—but it comes garlanded in a prose style very near to unsurpassed in the rhythms of its rolling anapests, its bright flashes of remembrance, its whispers out of time. ■

YAROSLAVA MILLS

C. Wright Mills in Cuernavaca, Mexico, in 1960, when he taught a seminar at the University of Mexico

The Half-Forgotten Prophet

by NORMAN BIRNBAUM

I first read C. Wright Mills in Dwight Macdonald's all too short-lived journal *Politics* in 1944. It was an essay on the plight of the intellectuals. I was 18 at the time and thought there was nothing better than becoming an intellectual—and I suppose I had John Dewey's influence on the New Deal generation in mind. Mills's earliest academic work was on American pragmatism, which he viewed as our way of connecting present and future, a dramaturgy of historical purpose. By the time I heard Mills speak, at a meeting of the Eastern Sociological Society in 1948, he had become exceedingly pessimistic about the liberating power of thought. That made sense to me. I was studying sociology in the graduate program at Harvard, where themes like class, gender and race were assiduously underemphasized. In the larger university there was almost nothing to be heard of Joseph Schumpeter's claim that intellectuals were ineradicably anticapitalist. Harvard's professors were too busy flying to Washington to staff the agencies of our expanding imperial power. One could not emigrate to Columbia University to study with Mills. His appointment was at Columbia College, and he warned graduate students away: he was thought an outsider in the "profession," and association with him was unhelpful to their careers. Still, it was Mills (and to be sure, David Riesman) whom the New York intellectuals and their readers in the universities thought of when they thought of sociology at all. Mills was the self-designated survivor of a tradition of large historical and social criticism in American sociology that had largely disappeared by the time he apprenticed himself to it.

The Politics of Truth
Selected Writings of C. Wright Mills.
Selected and introduced by
John H. Summers.
Oxford. 296 pp. Paper $21.95.

I recall holding a copy of the newly published *White Collar* one spring day in 1952, on the steps of Harvard's Emerson Hall. Talcott Parsons came by, took the book from my hands, opened directly to Mills's description of the university as a higher or lower fusion of bureaucracy and feudalism and said that he entirely disagreed—and added, oddly, that he had not read the book. Time passed, and in 1956 I found myself teaching at a place where my colleagues did read Mills, the London School of Economics. No one, however, had met him. Then we learned that he was a Fulbright professor in Copenhagen, and so we invited him to London. I was his host for the visit and was astonished at his first question. Why, when he asked to be sent as a Fulbright professor to the LSE, had we said that we were not interested? We hadn't: no one had asked us. The Fulbright authorities, apparently, thought that they could hardly deny an award to Mills—but must have considered it safer to send him to Denmark.

Mills traveled frequently back and forth across the Atlantic in those years. I was among those who introduced him to British and European academics sympathetic to the American radicalism he represented. They liked his admission of perplexity in the face of change in modern social structure and were scornful of his American detractors, like Edward Shils, who denigrated Mills in the CIA-funded monthly *Encounter*. "Wright is fortunate in his enemies," the British historian Edward Thompson said. In Europe, he was fortunate in his new friends—Thompson among them. He traveled in Communist Europe with Ralph Miliband, an LSE political scientist and the intellectual voice of those in the Labour Party persisting in a British sort of Marxism. (One of his sons, the present British foreign secretary, David Miliband, was given the middle name Wright as a token of affection for Mills.)

Marxism in several interpretations was being widely discussed in Western Europe—and there were signs in Soviet Europe in the late 1950s and early '60s of considerable discontent with the ossified dogmas of the post-Stalinist Communist parties. Mills had grown up in late New Deal America and studied sociology at Wisconsin with a German émigré

Norman Birnbaum is professor emeritus at the Georgetown University Law Center. He was on the founding editorial board of New Left Review *and is a member of the editorial board of* The Nation. *His most recent book is* After Progress: American Social Reform and European Socialism in the Twentieth Century *(Oxford).*

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scholar, Hans Gerth; he was thoroughly immersed in the analysis of the newer forms of capitalism of the '20s and '30s and had plenty of contact with Trotsky's American followers. His travels in Europe constituted a spiritual homecoming as well as a voyage of discovery.

Apart from his many books, Mills published articles, polemical letters and reviews in an unending stream, lectured widely and corresponded with critics and friends ceaselessly until his death, at age 45, in 1962. John Summers, who has been working with the Mills legacy for years, has done us the large service of collecting in *The Politics of Truth* many essays, lectures and sketches. Summers provides an ample biographical sketch of Mills as well as a first-rate representative selection of his occasional writing. Perhaps, however, the phrase "occasional writing" is inappropriate. The themes of Mills's major works are quite visible in his shorter pieces—some of which offer hints of works he might have written. And some of the shorter pieces appeal precisely by virtue of their unfinished quality: we see a painstaking intellectual workman at his bench. The figure of speech is apt: Mills was a master craftsman who built his own house in Nyack, outside New York City. His intellectual work was artisanal, the sequence self-consciously defined: the design of a project, the assemblage and testing of materials, followed by construction, step by step. In the one case the product was a building, in the other an in-depth account of self-serving corporatism. Mills was also a photographer. His takes of the surface of our lives were often sharply, even cruelly, etched. He did not, however, stop at appearances and insisted that surface and body, event and larger process, incident and structure, were inseparable.

What can be said of Mills in his time, now that the time is past? He clearly thought that class society, with its visible stratification—and with much agitated awareness of it, at the top, the bottom and in between—had given way to a mass society. Where others, triumphantly or resignedly, saw in the postwar nation a society liberated from material worries and turned, creatively or neurotically, to cultural self-definition, he thought of it as a place of new compulsions and old constraints. Certainly, the imagery of *White Collar* was recognizable to anyone who knew the social criticism of *Partisan Review* writers Clement Greenberg and Dwight Macdonald, or of Robert Warshow at *Commentary*. *Dissent*, where this argument was axiomatic, was founded by Irving Howe and Lewis Coser in 1954—and in its early years some of it was a prolonged, if critical, footnote to Mills. Mills's Columbia colleague and friend Richard Hofstadter was melancholic about the fate of our Republic: citizenship was obsolete.

What lent Mills's account of the situation a special pathos were two elements—which Mills spent the rest of his life trying desperately to join. One was the larger historical analysis he learned from Hans Gerth, in which the United States was a specific case of a general tendency, despite all our differences from Europe. Bureaucratization in a merged public and private sphere, the concentration of power in politics, a leveling and enforced homogenization in culture were its outward signs. Modern society made freedom in the liberal sense of autonomous and reflective citizenship increasingly impossible. Many contemporaries stopped there, sadly but helplessly. Mills became angry—an anger that grew with time. It drove him in a relentless search for actors who could reset the historical clock.

The search was all the more relentless because in those days we feared extirpation in nuclear war. Much has been written about the intellectuals—some former radicals, some former Communists, some New Dealers, many driven by one or another ethnic or religious obsession—who formed our ideological expeditionary force. Some were reckless in demanding that Western governments risk nuclear war to "stop Communism"; others were equally reckless in assuring us that war would not occur. Less has been written about the smaller group who warned that a war that would terminate much of human existence was all too possible. This group was no less varied in composition and motive than were its antagonists. It included the Nobel Laureate Linus Pauling, the Los Alamos physicist Philip Morrison, the Christian pacifist A.J. Muste, the historians H. Stuart Hughes and William Appleman Williams, the educator Robert Maynard Hutchins, the pediatrician Benjamin Spock and Congressmen like Robert Kastenmeier of Wisconsin. Mills argued that a society in which critical reflection had given way to instrumental rationality was so heedless of its own humanity that it had no way to distinguish fantasies of destruction from routine political calculation. His passion for peace grew out of his iron hatred of the cold war's intellectual profiteers.

Mills left a great deal out. Ethnicity and race in the United States (and elsewhere) did not particularly interest him. Despite his affinity for the early twentieth-century sociolo-

Longing of the Accords

"life's white machine"
Geoffrey G. O'Brien and Jeff Clark

We're all tenants, of one kind
or another: lodgers, proprietors,
houseguests. So what matters is
what matters for most of us.
We shrink in silken alarm
in the corridor—someone is coming?
But boa-clad ushers receive us.

We were told we were on message,
were the subject, or topic. In fact
it made a little difference

but not enough to disturb or quiet us.
Concluding, perhaps rightly, we
were of the one or other sort, you signed off.
It was OK to take everything,
though not to want it.

JOHN ASHBERY

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gist Max Weber, a very profound student of religion, Mills was himself religiously unmusical. He was concerned with the social setting of personal development, but his portraits of human existence were frequently one dimensional. Summers has titled the collection *The Politics of Truth*—but how much ambiguity, or openness, did Mills allow himself in considering his own truths? He was occasionally amenable to correcting his notions of historical sequence but much less self-critical about his belief that humans were potentially antagonistic to hierarchy. On his own account, many were glad to serve.

Reviewing *White Collar* in *Partisan Review*, Dwight Macdonald said that with the expiration of Marxist eschatology, we were all looking for a new key to social existence—Mills no less than the rest of us. Mills's eventual answer, after encountering in Europe in the late '50s strong oppositional stirrings that were to follow later in the United States, was that the new bearers of a project of social transformation were the intellectual vanguard. Allowed by society to think, but told not to think too much, they resented being denied autonomy—or ascribed the role of court jesters. In the American '50s, Mills and others across the political spectrum were described not as social thinkers but as social critics. The implication was that the major structures of society would remain intact, no matter what was said.

Yet for some years Mills was the clearest voice of the American opposition to the Democratic Party's fusion of welfare and warfare. In 1958 he published the short book *The Causes of World War Three*, in which, several years before Eisenhower's warning about the military-industrial complex, he described an academic-military-industrial complex that gave us a poorly disguised one-party state. He characterized colleagues like Kissinger and theorists of nuclear war as "crackpot realists." When the United States broke off relations with Cuba and began its still unconcluded attempt to destroy Castro's revolution, Mills visited the island and returned to write *Listen, Yankee* (1960), in which he voiced the Cubans' bitterness at American ignorance of Cuban history—and of our own imperial past and present. Among its hundreds of thousands of readers was, apparently, John F. Kennedy. A month before his murder, the president received the French journalist Jean Daniel, who was en route to Cuba. In his discussion of Cuban history and the state of Cuban-American relations, Kennedy gave Daniel what could only have been a message meant for Castro: I am "President of the United States and not a sociologist"; I am under constraints. Was the Kennedy of the June 10, 1963, American University speech, which had called for a truce in the cold war, telling Castro to be patient, that he planned changes? In any event, the elegantly shaped fissures in the Kennedy project turned into the brutal contradictions of the Johnson presidency. Advances in civil rights and economic redistribution were accompanied by the destruction of much of our national moral substance in Vietnam.

Mills decried the "cheerful robots" produced by cold war culture. His younger readers, and some older ones, had an answer. The slogan of the 1965 Berkeley Free Speech Movement, evoking the computer cards used for data entry, was "I am a human being: do not bend, fold, spindle or mutilate." At its beginnings, the new movement politics skipped over class and material interests to return to the search for a world more human. Mills at the start of his career was enthusiastic about John Dewey's pragmatism precisely because it joined human purpose to the alteration of historical circumstances. At the end, the circumstances—as crushing as they were—struck him as rendering new purposes even more necessary.

Upon examination, however, these turned out to be the familiar old ones: the re-creation of a public sphere, the self-activation of citizens, the construction and consolidation of civic freedoms. His intellectual journey was thoroughly American, and he was far truer to liberalism than many of its most strident conventional defenders. The last piece in *The Politics of Truth* is a "Letter to the New Left" of 1960—a response to an anthology some of us published in London earlier that year under the title *Out of Apathy*. In it, Mills tried to settle accounts with the proponents of the idea then circulating about an "end of ideology." Unfortunately, he did not acknowledge that the society described by the proponents of the idea (Raymond Aron and Daniel Bell, most prominently) was remarkably similar to Mills's account of society. Routine's soporific effect on politics, as his disillusioned contemporaries saw it, wasn't all that different from the civic vacuum Mills deplored. Like everyone else, Mills was tied to his times. His call to revolt was one of the influences that produced, in the end, not revolution but rebellion—enough to disprove his own long conviction of the immobility of our society, sufficient to change society in major ways but hardly the rupture he yearned for. Mills is half forgotten—perhaps because much of what he said is now taken for granted. In the end, this splendid dramatist gave us not a night on the barricades but a full afternoon of historical questions, many of them with us still. ■

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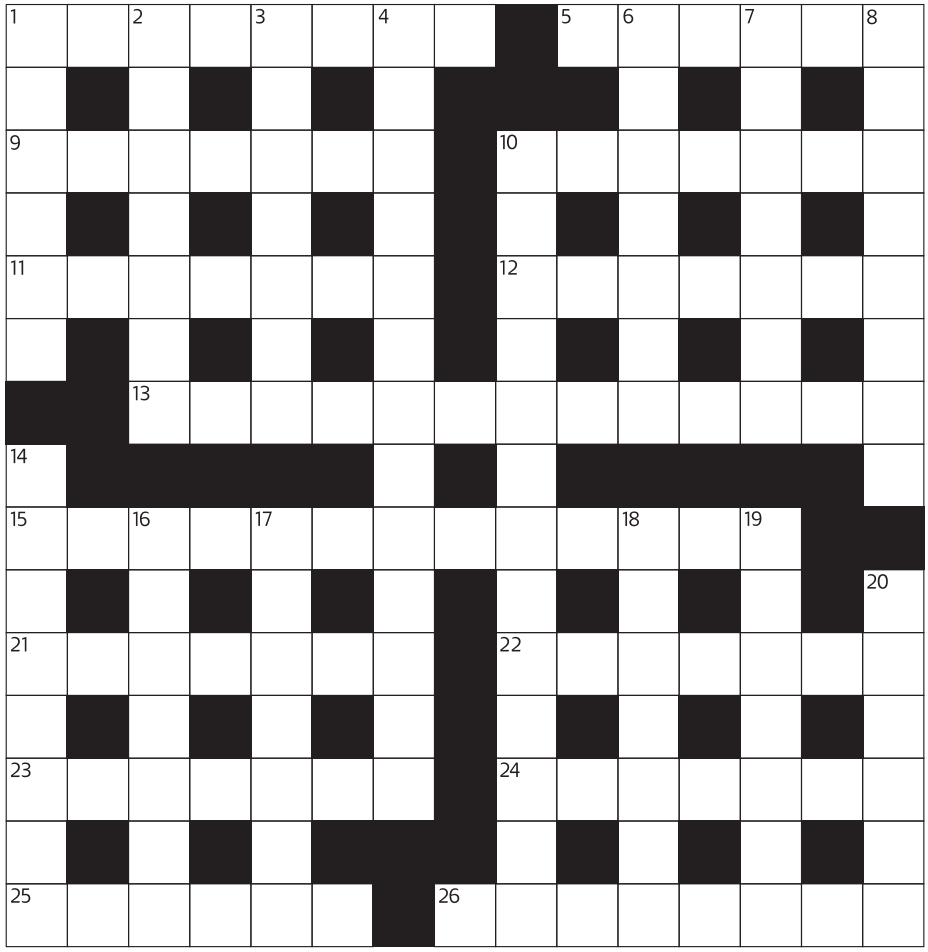

ACROSS

1 Poverty-stricken, I tend gin mixture. (8)

5 Possibly Beatrix gets to be the one to put plants in the right containers—or to make them! (6)

9 A specific number I would shortly bring back with a facial disguise. (7)

10 Tot container, with a dramatic effort to write things down. (4-3)

11 Arrange in sequence everything that comes back in a good place for doves. (7)

12 A South American flower. (7)

13 How the Brits refer to what we call a dime novel—though we multiply their worth by ten. (5,8)

15 Demolish what could be cast on us. (5,3,5)

21 The more it's different, the more it's a theoretical statement! (7)

22 Protest strongly, but possibly give in to the onset of happiness. (7)

23 Makes what things like oranges might be put in, around the east. (7)

24 Twelve months long, usually ending on your listening apparatus. (3,4)

25 Sliding into place, obviously not the hard way. (6)

26 Met in return with false steps—but stormy scenes. (8)

DOWN

1 Charge concealed by certain dictator. (6)

2 Explain more clearly, confused old Veep! (7)

3 Shoot the breeze with mother, not out for a pipe. (7)

4 With cursory "Jack Sprat" and "Humpty Dumpty" examples? (7,6)

6 One might play it, but it's nothing in a car possibly. (7)

7 Puts a little "something else" in whatever the glass holds. (The wrong spot ends up "not on"!) (4,3)

8 In a haphazard way, hurried to provide title in Portugal—only the last half. (8)

10 "Never do today what you can put off till tomorrow" may be your watchword, if you do. (13)

14 The sort of race that shows what you have to get over. (8)

16 Football teams for us, a morning break for the Brits. (7)

17 A sort of rake can possibly turn up what's found in the outer skin layer. (7)

18 You have a sort of love for the writer to be around! This way you cover everything! (7)

19 Possibly oil discovered with rest, in a way—just hangs around! (7)

20 This sort of starch helps you navigate around. (6)

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H	O	M	E	P	L	A	T	E	■	S	H	A	K	E
E	■	O	■	L	■	N	■	N	■	A	■	N	■	N
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R	■	D	■	M	■	I	■	M	■	T	■	O	■	A
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C	H	E	A	T	E	R	■	I	B	E	R	I	A	N
E	■	Z	■	A	■	T	■	T	■	R	■	T	■	D
S	P	E	A	R	■	H	A	Y	M	A	K	E	R	S

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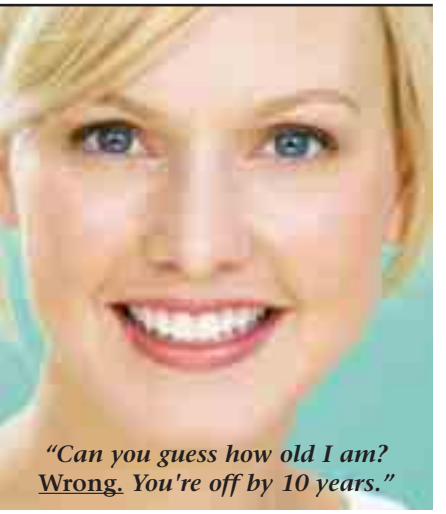
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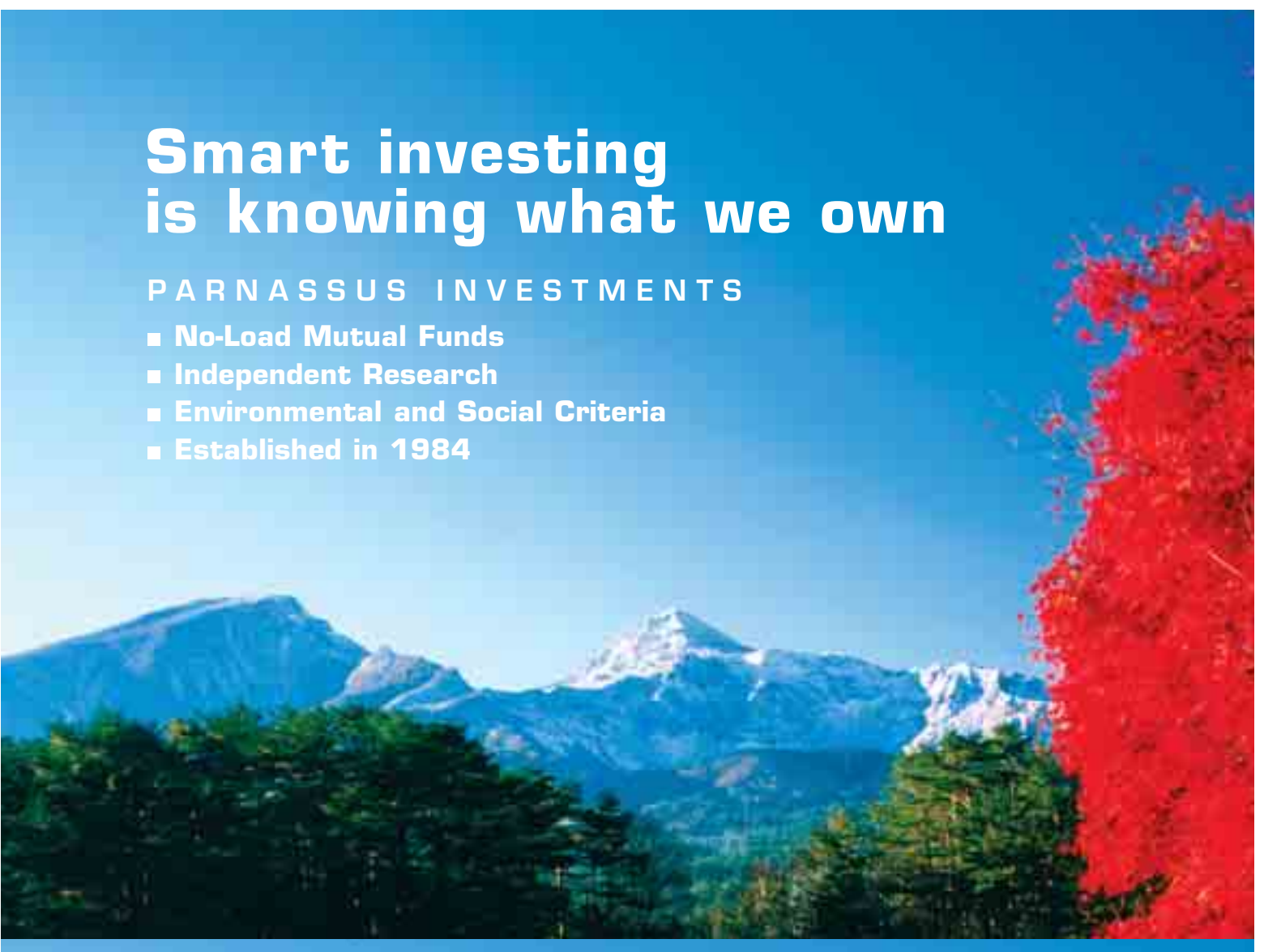

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